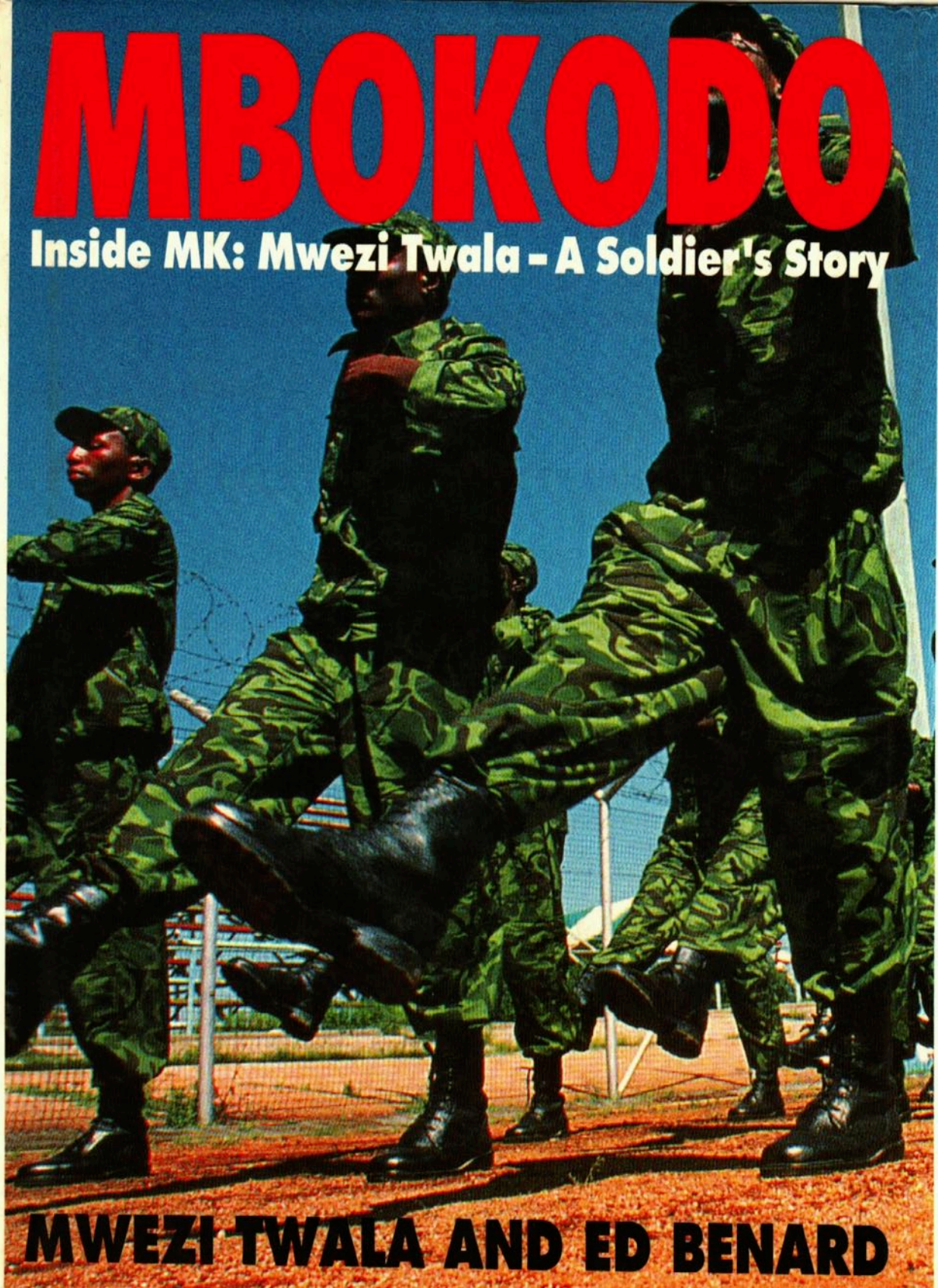


MBOKODO

Inside MK: Mwezi Twala - A Soldier's Story



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MWEZI TWALA AND ED BENARD

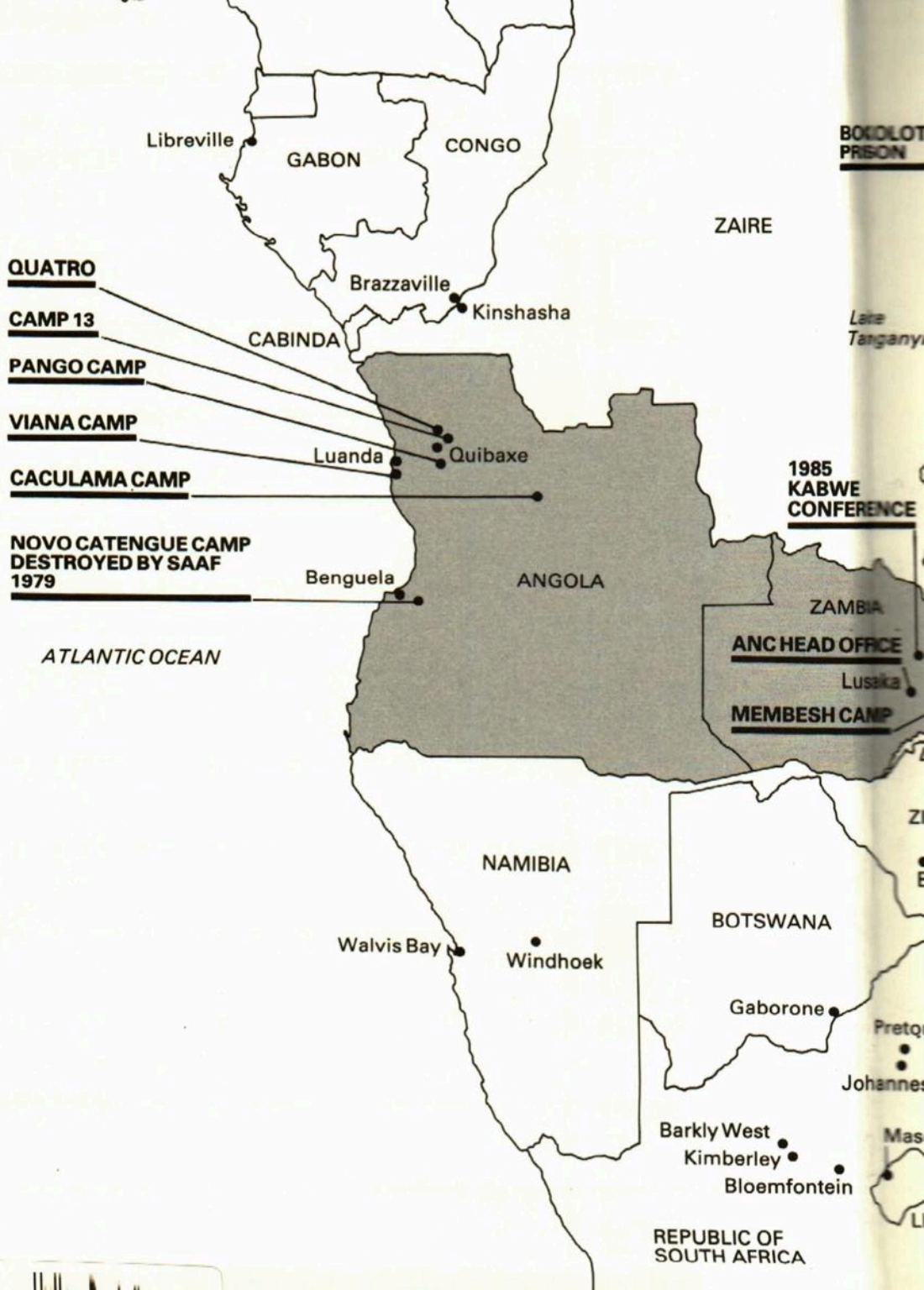


MWEZI TWALA AND ED BENARD

Mwezi Twala was born in 1944. His parents were staunch supporters of the ANC and he was brought up with a strong sense of personal worth and dignity. The cruelty and humiliation of apartheid were the crucible in which his spirit was forged to resist tyranny wherever he found it. In 1975 he became a member of the MK and left the country to receive military training in the USSR.

However, after working as an instructor for some time, he realised that the ANC in exile had lost the spirit of Albert Luthuli and that the armed struggle had failed. The leaders in Lusaka lived well while the cadres — underfed, suffering from malaria and other tropical diseases, and prevented from following their desire to join the liberation struggle in South Africa — rotted in Angolan camps. Cadres who dared to complain about their enforced inactivity and poor conditions were brutally punished and labelled as dissidents, as were those who attempted to resign from the ANC in order to fight the apartheid regime on their own. Eventually, they rose in revolt.

One of the 'Committee of Ten' elected to represent the grievances of the MK in Angola was Mwezi Twala. His story is one of indomitable courage in the face of adversity.





MBOKODO

*This book is dedicated to
our comrades who lie buried in unmarked shallow graves
in distant African lands and
those who returned broken in body, mind and spirit;
all other victims of the Mbokodo,
the widows, the orphans and those who lost loved ones; and
all who made sacrifices to fight apartheid and keep
the spirit of Luthuli's African National Congress alive.*

MBOKODO

Inside MK-Mwezi Twala A Soldier's Story

ED BENARD AND MWEZI TWALA

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Last, but certainly not least, Mwezi's family, who never gave up hope, and whose prayers for his safe return were answered.

1. My Pilgrimage begins

My name is Mwezi Twala. In my language *Mwezi* means someone who helps you to cross an obstacle, such as a river, or to overcome a problem. I like to think that I have lived up to the name which my Zulu father and my Xhosa mother gave me. My wife is a Sotho, so we are a veritable league of African nations! Coincidentally, though I really did not plan it that way, the Zulu, the Sotho and the Xhosa are the three largest tribes in South Africa and comprise approximately sixty per cent of the South African black population. Therefore I am related to almost every black person in South Africa, and for that reason, I have never been a tribalist. I speak all three African languages fluently (as well as English, Afrikaans and a little Portuguese), but I am most comfortable in South Sotho, because the area where I grew up, which is called Evaton, has predominantly Sesotho speaking people.

My story begins in 1975. I was thirty-one years of age and, in the tradition of my Zulu forebears, I was off to war. My war, however, was to be very different to that fought at Isandhlwana, where the Zulus crushed the British in 1879. Little did I know what the future held for me early that morning in Manzini, Swaziland. It was a bright and shining morning, and the dew on the ground gave everything a newly washed, sparkling look that went well with my sense of adventure. I was one of a group of three new Umkhonto we Sizwe recruits (my 'travelling name' was Khotso Morena) making our way to Mozambique by way of the village of Lomahasha on the Swaziland/Mozambique border. It was a risky journey and would take a number of hours to complete.

Having wetted your appetite, I would like to digress and tell you what had brought me to this crisis point in my life. Why was I risking

my freedom and possibly my life to join this illegal (in South Africa) organisation? Only someone who has experienced apartheid can understand.

I was the fifth of a seven child family. I had three brothers and three sisters. I was born in 1944, at a time when the National Party was laying its plans to sweep into supreme power. My parents were family-oriented, peace-loving people, who insisted that our evening suppers were a family affair, a time to be together. We would each recount the good, bad and perplexing events of the day and invariably Dad would find something to praise in the things we had handled well and shed light, in his own unique way, on our unanswered problems at school or in the street. These daily discussions almost always progressed to current political events and news of the day and even at a tender age I used to enjoy listening to Dad's political discourses. They were, for some mysterious reason, the most interesting part of the entire supper conversation for me.

My father was a school teacher and he and Mom were staunch Christians who brought us up in the Methodist Church and its teachings. When Dad started talking politics, he did so in a very gentle, articulate and constructive way. He explained that he was one of the few black men from the Cape Province who had acquired the right to vote under the qualified franchise provisions of the Cape Colony. (At the founding of the old Union of South Africa in 1910 this right was not extended to the black population of the Orange Free State, Natal and Transvaal.) In the 1924 election campaign, with the help of black organisers such as Mr S Khakane, Prime Minister Hertzog of the National Party had canvassed and won the support of many black voters in Kimberley, where my father was working as a teacher. However, in 1936, Hertzog steered an act through parliament which removed the Cape black voters from the common voters' roll and placed them on a separate roll, and in 1959 the National Party demonstrated their arrogance by arbitrarily withdrawing the voting right from the Cape black community.

These historical truths I learnt around the supper table from my father, who kept us right up to date on political happenings. He explained that in 1948 the NP had taken a vice-like grip of all South African population groups, even the whites.

In this manner I learnt the basics of South African politics and the more I was taught the more fascinated I became. My father was an ardent African National Congress supporter. He revered the principles which the ANC espoused, and had a special admiration for Chief Albert Luthuli, who became ANC president in 1952. I was

greatly influenced by him, and I became an 'ANC man' quite early in life. His greatest attribute was his absolute belief in peaceful negotiation. He was a soft-spoken man whose tactics were, when we children had misbehaved, to sit us down, point out our misdemeanour and proceed to explain how we had brought shame on ourselves. My mother, on the other hand, was feared by all of us, for her method was scolding and occasionally the strap. Looking back, it was a reasonably balanced paternal system, but it was my father's approach that appealed to me.

My first experience of black dissatisfaction with the South African political system occurred in 1955, when a bus boycott was initiated by the residents of Evaton because of a rise in the bus fare to Johannesburg. In response to this action the owner of the bus service, a Mr Caleo, employed the 'Russians', a notorious black gang, to beat up the organisers of the boycott. The violence that followed lasted three years and left many people homeless and frightened, seeking asylum and peace in neighbouring townships such as Soweto and those around Vereeniging.

My exposure to violence at an early age probably hardened me to a certain extent, and made me better able to endure the hardships that I would experience later in life. My brother Winston and I were frequently involved in fights, and our home often served as a refugee centre during township upheavals such as the bus boycott, when people slept on the floor of our kitchen, kept warm during winter by the large coal stove. On occasions such as these, our house resembled an overcrowded bus terminal. There would be mothers suckling their babies and sleeping bodies strewn everywhere. It required the wisdom of Solomon to reconcile the differences between those desperately trying to enforce the bus boycott in protest against the increased fares and those who, deprived of transport, would receive no pay. All enjoyed protection while under my father's roof. At an early age I was given a gun to assist in providing that protection.

During the period of disturbances my parents, unlike many others, did not move from their home and by some miracle we were left in peace. I was with them throughout those dreadful turbulent years. Dad continued teaching and people looked to him for comfort and advice. Many of them had been his pupils. I remember the times when the 'Russians' fought among themselves or when common gangsters quarrelled, causing bloody street wars, and Dad would prevail upon them to stop the slaughter and bloodshed. I remember too, how he once campaigned against some black businessmen who had gone to Pretoria to request the government to remove Indian

businesses from Evaton. He saw this as an act of greed and racism. He circulated a petition amongst the Evaton residents, stating that they were satisfied and happy with the services rendered to the community by the Indians and asserting that the black businessmen were exploitative and greedy. People like Solly Nathee and Bob Asmal, both Indian business leaders, sought Dad's advice. Solly Nathee was later to leave South Africa for India, where he became the first Chief Representative of the ANC.

Life in Evaton was quite pleasant, and (by today's standards) simple and uncomplicated – my biggest source of concern was my strict mother! She was however also very loving. After supper Dad would retire to mark schoolwork – he taught Mathematics, English and History – and Mom would often read to us. She particularly liked reading stories from Greek mythology. From this I developed a love of reading. I read everything I could lay my hands on, whether it was written in English, Sotho, Zulu or Xhosa. On other nights, usually during the school holidays, we would sing. I enjoyed singing: later when I studied in Swaziland three other boys and I formed the 'Keynotes Quartet', and we sang well enough to be sent on a tour of Swaziland! There was a small cinema in Evaton, but I seldom went there, for it cost money, and I preferred to play soccer.

I was a disaster at school. My brothers and sisters started their schooling at the ages of four or five years whilst I had to wait until I was seven. However, I was not disadvantaged by the two-year delay for by that time my father had taught me to read and write. I liked school and did well, but I was intolerant of anything I considered to be wrong. I was too outspoken for my own good and this often landed me in trouble. I started school at the Catholic primary school in Evaton. For the last hour of school every day the Catholic students would go to catechism. I felt that I too should become a Catholic (because I would not go to heaven otherwise). I consulted my parents on the matter, and although my father was opposed to this idea at first, he later relented. I attended my first catechism class which was being run by a Father Marino. Upon hearing my name he asked me whether I was related to 'Twala the teacher'. I replied in the affirmative only to be told by Father Marino that I was a child of the devil and that I was unwelcome. Apparently my father had had a tiff with Father Marino (I never found out what it was about) and I was out of the catechism class before I joined it! This was very embarrassing for me. I was told to go to the sister principal who typed a note for me to give to my mother. I arrived home and gave the letter to my mother who told me to change from my school uniform into my old-play-clothes

and go play outside. I had been expelled from my first school in the first grade!

My father arranged for me to attend the community school in Evaton which he had founded. The government funded the school on a rand for rand basis, that is it would supply one rand for each rand raised by the PTA. Upon graduation from primary school I went to Basutoland (later Lesotho) and became a boarder at St Agnes School in Teyateyaneng. I enjoyed living in Lesotho. At the weekend I used to wander around the hills looking for caves in which there were Bushman paintings. My younger sister and I joined two other girls and we formed a singing quartet which was quite successful. Our science master was a wonderful man by the name of Mokhehle Lethlatse. He was the brother of Ntsu Mokhehle, the current prime minister of Lesotho. On occasion, as he entered the classroom, we would quietly start singing liberation songs. In this way he might be prevailed upon to close the door, cancel the science lesson, and give us political instruction. He told us about the Basutoland Congress Party which rules Lesotho today. At that time the country had not yet achieved independence and was still under British rule. There was no border post between South African and Lesotho.

In 1960, at the age of sixteen, I was declared *persona non grata* in Basutoland and expelled from the school. I had become involved in the politics of the country and supported the Basutoland Congress Party. The first party to rule Lesotho after independence was the Basutoland National Party led by Leabua Jonathan. The ANC was well disposed to both the BNP and the BCP (which had in fact been founded by the ANC). My political activities in Lesotho were to cause me many problems when later I sought employment in South Africa.

I was sent to the Catholic Little Flower High School in Bremersdorp (later to be called Manzini) in Swaziland. My brother Winston and I were boarders at the school. We organised a strike at the school to protest against a number of grievances. The school fees were high, the food was poor, we received harsh treatment from the Irish priests and the prefects at the school were appointed by the school staff whereas we felt they should be elected by the student body. Winston was the first to be expelled from the school, although the staff decided to capitulate on the matter of the election of prefects. However when Winston's brother was elected a prefect, this was too much for the staff to swallow, and I was expelled too! My older sister was teaching at that time at St Theresa's and she intervened on my behalf. I was given a second chance but was not allowed to remain a boarder at the school. I found a room in the township, purchased a Primus stove,

some pots and pans, and felt a tremendous sense of independence!

At about this time, I started my bad habit of smoking, and I also met a coloured girl with whom I fell madly in love. This was my first love affair. My girlfriend attended St Michael's Anglican School and I was smitten by her! During breaks, I would sit on the low wall which separated the Bishopric from the school and would hold hands with my girlfriend, smoking a cigarette. This was like rubbing salt into a wound as far as the school authorities were concerned. They were convinced that I had purchased a one-way ticket to hell. Needless to say, I was expelled for a third time. (Many years later I was to bump into my old flame in the Moulin Rouge Night Club in Mbabane. Unfortunately I had my wife with me and she was furious!) Next, at a Trades School in Mbabane, the capital of Swaziland, I studied to be an electrician. The school used to pay a pitifully small stipend to its students, although the food was good, but you guessed it, I was involved in arranging yet another strike and I was expelled again!

A characteristic of my father that I really admired and appreciated was that after each expulsion from school, he would listen to my story and then discuss the matter with me. He never condemned me, but gave me advice – he treated me like a good gardener treats his plants. He allows them to grow up in the manner best suited to them.

After my expulsion from the trade school he arranged for me to go to school at Bensonvale in the Cape, where I wrote the matriculation examination as a private candidate in 1964. There was an underground ANC cell at the school and we would meet regularly in the woods to discuss politics, the Freedom Charter, etc. Two classmates, Teko Ndamase and Mike Sidzama, and I decided to leave South Africa to join Umkhonto we Sizwe. We had been led to believe that we would be going to Botswana, but shortly before we were to leave our destination was changed to Lesotho. Teko and I were disappointed: we felt that we would be going to an island in the sea of apartheid. Ashamedly we backed out at the last minute and Mike left on his own. Years later, in 1977, I bumped into him in a pub in Lusaka; I lost track of Teko.

I returned home and busied myself with the task of earning a living. I secured a position as a clerk in the Wilberforce Institute Post Office in Evaton, where I worked until 1968 when I was transferred as an understudy to the postmaster of the Residencia post office, a Mr Van Rensburg. (Residencia had been the white area of Evaton, but had changed its name because its residents had been embarrassed by the Evaton bus boycotts of 1955–7. Now it was being incorporated into the Sebokeng Administration Board and the whites were required to

move out of the area.) The people in the area were mainly conservative Afrikaners, and I would address Mr van Rensburg as *meneer* when no one was in the post office and as *baas* when there was. I did not want to embarrass him – that was the custom in those days, and despite their patronising manner the whites were kind to me and would frequently bring me a basket of fruit from their orchards.

In late 1969 I married Damaris, whom I had known since childhood – her family had been long term customers of our family store. Initially my courtship of her was resented by her brothers, as she was of a different tribe to me, but our common political interests soon overcame their prejudices. With my new responsibility, I decided to hell with politics, I would concentrate on building a career and a future with my beautiful new wife. After the establishment of the Sebokeng Administration Board I decided to quit the Post Office and seek employment with the Board. I was interviewed by officials of the Board as well as by the security police and my previous political activities were frowned upon. I did not get a post and went to work for Barclays Bank as a teller, which despite paying better than the Post Office was considerably more boring. I quit to take a job as a machine operator at Stewarts and Lloyds, a large engineering company in Vereeniging. I enjoyed working there and rapidly advanced through clerical work, despatch, personnel and training. I was given an aptitude test and assigned to a group working on an operations improvement project which I really enjoyed. I felt highly motivated, my career was progressing well, I was gaining experience, learning a lot, and even had my own office.

On Fridays we used to knock off early and some colleagues used to gather in my office and have a few drinks before going home. On one particular Friday afternoon in 1972, we were enjoying our drinks when eight cars surrounded my office, which was isolated from the main buildings and had large glass windows on all four sides. The works manager appeared – my immediate assumption was that we were being raided for violating the company's ban on liquor on the premises – but close on his heels were the security police. They roughed up a few of those present and searched my office thoroughly but were not at all interested in the bottle of liquor. The following morning I was called to a meeting attended by the personnel, training and works managers, all of them acutely embarrassed, and told that I was fired. Stewart and Lloyds was regarded as being strategic and the security police had prevailed upon the management to fire me because of my political history. I was devastated. Two of my colleagues were also dismissed, one of whom had studied for the priesthood and

had never been involved in politics at all.

I was unemployed and applied for several positions but was never successful. From time to time the security police would pull me in for questioning. They gloated that I would never find a job again. My mother became frantic and went to the police station to tell them to stop harassing me, but to no avail. Jobs were not easy to come by even without a political record and in addition to the financial burden my unemployment caused, I was now liable to be arrested for what was colloquially known as 'loaferskap' – vagrancy. If you were a loafer you could be fined R30 (approximately \$45 in those days) or sent to work as a farm labourer for thirty days. It was a stupid system, because loaferskap was not a criminal offence and if a prisoner ran away from the farm to which he had been assigned after one day, and appeared before the same magistrate who had previously sentenced him, he would get the same sentence again. (In practice, of course, you could be sent to work on a farm in the Eastern Transvaal, and if you deserted you would have the problem of having to travel hundreds of kilometres to get home.) To avoid this you had to have registered employment. To keep the wolf from the door, Damaris and I took over the fruit and vegetable section in my mother's small store. My mother wanted to register me as an employee of the store, which I was, but I was worried that the security police would regard this as a ruse to get around the loaferskap law, in which case I could face indefinite detention. I was fortunate because the local police were quite sympathetic: my family were well known in the area; my father had taught some of them, and I felt reasonably confident that they would not arrest me. Damaris and I found trading to be quite a profitable business, but my heart was not in it; I felt that I was vegetating. The unjust apartheid system gnawed at my vitals, and on a trip to visit my sister in Swaziland in 1975, Keith Mokoape (brother of Azapo leader Dr Aubrey Mokoape) came to visit me with the invitation 'Why not come and join the MK?'

My sister had been trained as a teacher at the University of the Witwatersrand. She had quit South Africa for Swaziland with the introduction of Bantu Education because, as she expressed it: 'I cannot feed poison to my people.' She encouraged me to consider the offer seriously, as did her husband, who was also a teacher. Their home was often the venue for meetings of the substantial ANC community in Swaziland. I retained a sense of guilt for not having left with Mike Sidzama in 1964 and I decided that it was time to take up the sword.

I returned home to tell Damaris. She never said a word, but a river of tears ran down her cheeks. I held my eighteen month old son,

Sizwe, not knowing when I would see him again. I knew that I would be sent to the Soviet Union for a year of training, but I did not want to raise false hopes with Damaris, so I said (conservatively, I thought) that I would return in three years. In fact it would be fifteen. In all that time I had virtually no communication with my wife, as it was not permitted in the MK. I left without telling my mother and returned to Swaziland, but while I was still there she learnt of my plans and sent my brother Sipho and his wife to persuade me to return. A very dear aunt had died and I was obligated to pay my respects. My mind was in a turmoil: I was torn between duty to family and to country, but I felt that I could procrastinate no more. I told Sipho my decision and he said: 'Go well, my brother.'

This brings me back to the point of my departure from Swaziland. My brother, Winston, had driven Alec Shabalala and me from Evaton to my sister's house in Manzini two days previously. We had contacted the ANC and been told to be ready to depart at 0600 hours. A guide called Duma had collected us and driven Alec, me and another recruit named David to a spot close to the border, where we left the car and went on foot, taking care to give a wide berth to the border posts and the villages.

The fence on the Swaziland side of the border was about two and a half metres high, and we climbed over it with difficulty. We entered no man's land and saw some Frelimo soldiers who assisted us over the second (Mozambican) border fence. (It was lucky that they had been expecting us, as we had heard that a few days earlier some people from the Mngomezulu tribe who were going to join the Pan Africanist Congress had been mown down by Frelimo guards as they tried to enter Mozambique.) Much to our relief, we crossed the border safely. The state of tension had been extreme as we imagined security police behind every bush waiting to arrest us. On the Mozambique side we were met by two men, Ben, a Frelimo official, and Lennox, the chief ANC representative in that country, who transported us by car directly to Maputo airport.

Maputo looked forlorn. The numerous sidewalk cafes were deserted, while outside apartment buildings could be seen the large packing cases of the last departing Portuguese. The city already had a slightly tarnished appearance; there was a lot of litter in the streets and the bases of the trees had not been whitewashed for some time as was Portuguese colonial custom. In the tropics, lack of maintenance is soon noticeable.

The countryside was green and lush and there were frequent Frelimo road blocks that had to be passed. Most of them consisted of

machine gun emplacements surrounded by a dozen or so Frelimo soldiers in grubby camouflage uniforms. Some of them were sleeping in the sun. The roads were poor by South African standards; they were narrow, winding and potholed. We were briefed during the drive and supplied with East African Airways tickets to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. We were also given a name and telephone number to contact the minute we arrived at Dar es Salaam airport.

On arrival in Tanzania, we phoned our contact who told us to wait and to avoid any conversation. We were taken to an ANC safe house in the suburb of Temeke where we were housed for a month while travel documents were prepared for the next leg of our journey. At the house we met a group of ANC recruits already staying there and within the next twenty-four hours, more recruits arrived from South Africa. Most of them appeared to be in their thirties.

This time of waiting was the last for many years to come that we would relax, enjoy peace of mind, and make lasting friends. Only having to take care of our own needs, cooking, washing dishes, clothes, and so on, we whiled away the time discussing politics. We were discouraged from leaving the house and warned not to associate with South Africans. Any ANC members of long standing that we happened to meet were to be told that we were Pan Africanist Congress members. (The old cadres were disillusioned and they would demoralise us.) We were full of excitement and pride at the thought that we were among the chosen ones going off to become trained as soldiers, ANC soldiers! One day in the near future we would return to South Africa to free our brothers, sisters and children from white supremacy and oppression.

There was a relaxed almost festive mood among the recruits until an incident cast a shadow over our sunny days. We had in our group an MK veteran by the name of Langa – a thoroughly disreputable character, who had to inject himself constantly with antibiotics to counteract the venereal diseases he had contracted – who took it upon himself to report to the ANC officials whenever they came to visit us, even though we had an appointed ‘chairman’ whose function it was to report any misdemeanours to officialdom. One evening four of us, including Jabu Zikalala, went to a bar near our house. Jabu was an artist (in fact he created the logo the ANC uses today) and he liked to flirt with the girls. On this particular evening, he was successfully flirting with the Tanzanian barmaid. We had a curfew at 2200 hours, which was when the bar closed, so Jabu persuaded the girl to knock off a little early and she joined us as we walked back to the house. When we arrived, three of us joined our colleagues who were sitting

on the verandah but Jabu escorted the girl home and returned approximately an hour after curfew.

The next morning Langa reported the incident to the ANC security branch (known as *Mbokodo*, the grinding stone, so named because it 'ground' its enemies like maize) but blew it out of all proportion. It was viewed in a very serious light. Jabu was to have left for Moscow with us; instead he was taken away to Mbeya, in the southern part of Tanzania, for 'observation'. It appeared that Langa's motive was spite, since he had previously unsuccessfully tried to woo the barmaid. In itself the incident was of no great moment, except that it illustrated a pattern that I was to see repeated many times later: discredit the victim and then destroy him. Jabu was fortunate, because at the time the Mbokodo was still manned by adults; later it was to be manned mainly by teenagers.

After this unpleasant episode, we were more than happy to quit Dar es Salaam for Russia, the next leg of our adventure. It was to be my first time outside Africa. A group of thirteen of us were called and told that we were leaving for Moscow in the next few hours to undergo military training. Our joy knew no bounds – we were on our way to Victory!

2. Training in the USSR

The gentle bump of our plane's wheels as they contacted the ground at Sheremetyevo International Airport, Moscow, brought a cheer from the thirteen of us, much to the surprise of the other passengers and cabin crew. When we finally parked at the airport building we were told to remain seated until all the other passengers had left the aircraft. Ten minutes after the last passenger had disembarked a Russian military officer came aboard and instructed us in broken English to follow him. On the tarmac I experienced my first taste of Russian winter. It completely took my breath away. Thankfully, the Russian officer and his men supplied us with thick fleece-lined overcoats and Russian hats, after which we boarded a warm army bus to our final destination – a KGB military academy, a top-secret institution in Rasdori, approximately twenty-five kilometres from Moscow.

We were assigned living quarters in a building which looked typical of most of the apartment buildings in the wooded area. Around Moscow there were many large military garrisons, but they were disguised as apartment buildings and were not readily recognisable as garrisons. Having dumped our luggage in our allocated rooms (we were billeted two to a room) we were taken to the canteen for a hot meal before gladly turning in for the night, totally exhausted.

Reveille shocked us into life at 0500 hours on a freezing morning. My first thought was that black men were obviously not designed for this temperature. Then the purpose of being there overwhelmed my discomfort and I was ready for action. We met our KGB commander. She was in her late fifties or early sixties, she spoke no English (but could understand it) and she gave her orders in Russian! She was a spinster, had fought in World War II and had gained the rank of captain. A tough cookie indeed! Later, when we got to know her better,

we discovered that her bark was worse than her bite. We became quite fond of her and called her 'Mama Olga'. She never wore a dress or a skirt and was always dressed in civilian clothes (trousers). We knew who wore the pants in this KGB establishment! Mama Olga had no problem whatsoever establishing her authority over us from day one – nor did we have any problem understanding who was the boss! One day Joe Slovo, the South African Communist Party boss, came to visit us and Mama Olga wanted to know 'Who is he? How can you make a white man your leader?'

I had heard a great deal about Joe Slovo – I knew that he was a brilliant lawyer – but I was very disappointed after having met him face to face. He appeared to be a puppet who mouthed typical communist rhetoric and slogans. Moreover, I had the impression that he was very conscious of his white skin and that he was afraid of offending one of his black 'comrades'. Later meetings strengthened this impression. It seemed that both he and Ronnie Kasrils 'toed the Party line' assiduously, careful not to step on any important black leaders' feet.

Three teams of four young women each prepared our meals for us. Some of them were married, but they made us feel at home and they were always very friendly to us, as indeed were most of the Russian people once we got to know them. The Russian men in particular, we later discovered, could drink anyone under the table! At the academy we had telephones, but we could only phone Dzerzhinsky Square, the KGB HQ. We took turns, each morning and evening, to phone in a status report. If one of us wanted to date a Russian girl, her name and address had to be reported so that she could be cleared. (Presumably if she wasn't cleared by the KGB you couldn't date her, but I never heard of this happening.) I found Russian women very attractive, particularly those with mixed European and Asiatic blood. By and large I did not experience much racial discrimination in Russia. Once I had become friendly with a Russian woman, invariably she would want to touch my woolly hair. This really seemed to fascinate them.

Life was channelled in Russia: movement was restricted and I was sure, after a while, that the glowing statistics gleaned from *Pravda* and the books in the political academy did not reflect reality. The only person I met in the USSR who criticised anything concerning Soviet life was our delightful cleaning lady, of whom I became very fond. I think the feeling was reciprocated. She had an unpronounceable Russian name so we simply called her Mama. She frequently gave me a peck on the cheek and made the sign of the cross over me. I met her daughter, a single parent, who was an electrical engineer employed

at a hydroelectric plant somewhere in the vicinity of Moscow. I would have liked to maintain contact with them, but we were not permitted to do so.

We were assigned a KGB guardian angel by the name of Igor. He spoke English fluently, but it was not difficult to see that he was Russian because of his facial features. He had a beautiful young wife and two small children and they would escort us to the theatre, circus, etc. We went to the cinema a few times, but I did not enjoy it; the Russian films were primitive and the themes were hackneyed (the revolution, the heroes of the revolution, the heroes of labour, etc). We really enjoyed going to the ballet and the opera, as most of us had never had the opportunity in South Africa. Gradually I became aware that the communist system of indoctrination used a formula similar to that of the Salvation Army. There, if you want food you first have to have some religious instruction. In the KGB system, if you wanted any perk you first had to have some communist indoctrination. It was very well done; at first I did not even notice it!

Our lectures started the very first day after breakfast. The lecturers all spoke English – though with varying accents, depending upon the country in which they had learnt the language. Some had American accents, others spoke Oxford English, and we even had a lecturer with a South African accent. (He had lived in South Africa, and had a far better knowledge of the country than some of the ANC students did!) The lecturers wore civilian clothes, but we wore Russian military uniforms – ‘no-name brands’ with the epaulettes and the Soviet army badge on the lapel removed. Immediately after class we had to change into civilian clothes.

It was quite easy to determine which of our instructors had lived in a foreign country because aside from the English accent, those who had lived outside Russia wore far better quality clothes than those who had not. The instructors who had not ventured outside Russia wore the same suit day in and day out, and it looked as though the Five Year Plan for men’s suits had achieved the required quantity at the expense of quality! I was frequently approached by Russians who would offer to buy some article of clothing that I was wearing. (I am a modest dresser and my clothes were pretty much bread and butter clothes by South African standards.)

The only time our instructors wore uniforms was when we went into the field for practical military exercises. We were allowed to go out of the academy, but we seldom had time to as we were kept more than busy with our studies. We quickly learnt that one did not ask any personal questions of one’s instructor. In fact even amongst our ANC

comrades we did not ask personal questions! We were taught that by asking a question you were drawing attention to and suspicion on yourself. A good intelligence man encourages his opponent to 'offer' information. The KGB held the British intelligence service in high esteem; they regarded them as the best.

Strict Russian military discipline would apply at all times during our twelve-month course. Our military lecturers told us that it would consist of many disciplines, designed to give us the complete spectrum of what we would need to know to become a tight, efficient, effective and ruthless killer force for the benefit of our people, their freedom and our country. It would be known as a 'Commander's Course', specialising in Intelligence, Military and Combat Work (MCW). It would include the study of how underground structures are set up and integrated into the growth of the revolution, automatically becoming political military structures that control guerrilla units, which in turn manifest themselves in a rigidly disciplined regular army supported by structures including propaganda, printing works and facilities, newspapers, revolutionary underground units (freedom fighters or terrorists), logistics, medical facilities and support (hospitals and battlefield), communication and security. My specific subjects were intelligence, MCW, tactics, small arms and artillery, politics, military topography, sabotage, explosives, guerrilla tactics and finally communication.

Our lecture classes started at 0730 hours and lasted until 1600 hours with a thirty minute lunch break. The programme included Saturdays. Sunday was euphemistically called a 'free' day, but the work load was so intense that we had to study into the early hours of every morning (including the 'free' day) to cope with the curriculum. In addition to the theory of our commander's course, we had to undergo practical short-duration field exercises to gain hands-on experience. These took place in summer in the Crimea and lasted two weeks. The Crimea, which is south of Moscow, contained the largest military training base for foreigners, over a hundred square kilometres in area. This was a multinational facility where the regular armies of Tanzania, Lebanon, Latin America and so on – as well as liberation armies such as MK and the PLO – received training.

The purpose of our commander's course was not to teach us how to operate the weapons available, but rather to become familiar with the capabilities and characteristics of the various weaponry. For example, a rocket was used for area destruction: a single rocket, such as the one the MK fired at the South African Voortrekkerhoogte Military Base, had propaganda value, but did little real damage. For

each hectare of target, twenty to twenty-five rockets were required. We were taught how to carry out reconnaissance to determine how many rockets were required to destroy a target, and then, assuming a rocket launcher fired one rocket per five minutes, how many rocket launchers were required. Each rocket launcher had to be assigned an area of destruction.

We learnt about tanks, rocket launchers, mortars, howitzers and all sorts of other weapons. The exercises took place day and night, under the command of a general from Moscow. He – together with every other Russian general I met – was of World War II vintage. A young officer specialised in strategic weapons (nuclear missiles, etc): the old guard were probably out of date in this area of military science.

We stayed at the KGB's facilities, which were isolated from those of the army. The houses in which we stayed were marked 'Guest House – No Vacancy!' Our group and another from Chile did the same training. There was a young and attractive Chilean woman on the commander's course and I became good friends with her. Her male colleagues did not appear to approve of our friendship even though it was purely Platonic. One night I had insomnia and I went and sat on a bench in the garden. I enjoyed studying the stars of the northern sky. My Chilean friend came and joined me and we conversed long into the night. She was very unhappy with the military junta of General Pinochet. She spoke highly of Dr Allende who was the first president in a non-communist country to be freely elected on a Marxist-Leninist programme. He had wrought many changes in Chile and as a result the poor had a better life.

She had a very different background to me. She appeared to have come from a wealthy home, was well educated and spoke perfect English. I in turn told her about the problems facing South Africa and we did our best to solve the world's problems that night. Afterwards, we spoke to one another whenever the occasion allowed it; though we were from different continents we were, then, perfectly in tune in our political thinking. The idealism of my youth was to be modified later by a heavy tinge of realism. She was liberal and very idealistic: I wonder whether the years changed her too. I was later to discover that she was also a crack shot. She tried to contact me in Moscow before she returned to Chile, but fate did not allow it and she sent me a charming letter and wished me luck with the liberation of South Africa.

Later we did a second hands-on guerrilla training exercise in Putiyatina, near a major Russian Tank Division base north-east of

Moscow. In below-zero temperatures, with wind chill factors of minus twelve degrees Celsius, conditions we could never have imagined possible, we had to train.

It is difficult to explain to someone who has not experienced a Russian winter, just how bad it is! And for an African who had just arrived from a country which was almost on the equator, it was pure torture! One put on two pairs of thick socks, after which one 'bandaged' each foot with a cloth. One then put one's winter boots on and these were covered by an outer felt boot which had rubber soles and toes. Underwear was woolly 'long johns' covered by a track suit, over which one wore a quilted eiderdown type of pants and jacket. A big thick leather belt kept everything together. On top of it all went the traditional Russian fur hat. It was very difficult to run while dressed in all this clothing: at first I was worn out just carrying my clothes, let alone a knapsack, an infantry spade, a water bottle, a gas mask, ammunition and a weapon!

Putiyatina was approximately eighty kilometres from Moscow towards Leningrad (St Petersburg), surrounded by swamps and bogs in virgin forest. As part of our training we would be given a topographical map of an area which we would have to study and memorise. The 'captain' of the group would draw from memory the route we were to take. We took it in turns to be 'captain', and since I did not always trust my 'captain' of the day I usually prepared my own map too! Typically our guerrilla column would consist of a reconnaissance group, the main body and a rear guard.

On one occasion, I was in the main body, and I noticed that the reconnaissance group were springing up and down as they walked. They were in a bog and they seemed to be enjoying the trampoline-type movement they were making as the thin crust of vegetation bounced up and down. Of course had they punched through the vegetation they would have been in big trouble as it was near the end of the winter and there were still piles of snow lying around. With their heavy clothing and kit it would have been no mean feat to extricate them from the bog. Fortunately their luck held and no one sank, but we in the main body did not follow their lead.

We stayed at a model guerrilla base. The Russians had designed and built it from experience they had gained as partisans in World War II, from work with Frelimo groups, in Vietnam and every other liberation war in which they had been involved, even the war with Napoleon Bonaparte. Among our other lessons, we learnt where to locate a guerrilla base, how to defend it and how to use the topographical features of the terrain to put the enemy at a disadvantage.

During our sojourn in the Soviet Union another group of MK recruits arrived for training. One of them was an irrepressible, irreverent Zulu whose MK name was Abraham and who was to cause an international 'incident' later when he became severely intoxicated on a train travelling between Moscow and Siberia and started a fight. This misconduct was viewed in a very serious light and we all anticipated that Abraham would be sent home in disgrace. A disciplinary hearing was attended by the Soviet general who was responsible for all foreign recruits. It was quite evident that the general was extremely angry. The hearing was opened by Abraham's Russian guardian with a blow by blow account of his misconduct, after which Abraham was given the opportunity to respond to the allegations.

Abraham was not going to make life easy for anyone and he insisted on conducting his defence in Zulu, which had to be translated into English and then into Russian. The general had heavy Slavic features and brooding bushy eyebrows, and he gazed intently at Abraham while he conducted his protracted defence. Abraham concluded by asking the general: 'If you lock up a goat with a bale of green grass, can you blame it if it eats the grass?' When this was translated for the general, both he and the commissar burst out laughing, and as he walked from the room the general said admonishingly to Abraham that in future he should learn to behave himself even if he had eaten too much green grass. In years to come I was to bump into Abraham from time to time. He did not take the Russian general's advice and became pugnacious whenever he had too much 'green grass'.

Towards the end of 1976 we graduated, with two of us recommended to command big field formations such as battalions and brigades. My Russian instructors congratulated me for becoming, in their opinion, one of the best students at the academy. My prize: a number of classic books ranging from Tolstoy to war strategy. It was also encouraging that in our group a number of cadres were recommended to be commanders of sections and platoon field units.

And so our training was behind us. Now we were ready and very willing to leave Russia and go to Luanda where I imagined we would join our comrades and prepare for the freedom war in our own beloved country.

3. From Luanda to Lusaka

I looked out of the window as the plane circled Luanda in readiness to land. It was late summer, 1976. The capital of Angola appeared to consist of a small area of multi-storey buildings surrounded by a labyrinth of mud huts and shacks stretching off to the horizon. The multi-storey buildings were grouped around the bay, which was a beautiful azure blue lined by white, white beaches trimmed with palm trees.

When the aircraft doors were opened a hot, humid blast of tropical air hit us (Luanda is approximately ten degrees south of the equator), which was a welcome change from the biting cold of Russia. We were met by a senior ANC official and his aides, and set off for our new home, the garrison of the Nona Motorizada Brigade (9th Motorised Brigade), a tank unit. The city had a decayed look. A good paint salesman would make a fortune here, I thought to myself, but what struck me the most was the inordinate number of one-legged men on the streets: a terrible reminder of the millions upon millions of anti-personnel mines that infest the Angolan countryside.

Most of the shops were closed. 'Dollar shops' existed in which a person possessing hard currency (US dollars) could purchase a limited range of goods from the near-empty shelves. Basic commodities like salt, sugar and coffee were unavailable, even though Angola used to export both coffee and sugar. There were many skeletons of buildings which had been started by the Portuguese and left uncompleted. On the sidewalks at approximately hundred-metre intervals, African women were prepared to exchange Kwanzas (Angolan currency) for US dollars, or vice versa, at the black market rate (approximately six times the official rate of exchange, in favour of the capitalist dollar).

I noticed as we drove along that there were many unadorned

pedestals in the city. At the time of independence, the statues of the Portuguese explorers, navigators, and so on were removed from their pedestals, and they were to be found keeping company at an ancient fort on top of the hill – where, in addition to the statues, there were some severely damaged South African military vehicles. The windows of some of these were severely pockmarked where bullets and other projectiles had hit the armoured glass. I did not envy the drivers of the vehicles. The bullets must have been as thick as mosquitoes!

The scenery improved as we left the city; the countryside was lush with palms intermingling with baobab trees. From time to time we passed an African village where naked men and women unselfconsciously bathed in nearby streams. The roads were terrible, infested with potholes, which meant a bumpy ride. The driver leant on his hooter and we had the impression that we were driving at great speed, but in reality we could not have been doing more than thirty or forty kilometres an hour. The winding narrow road, congested with traffic, did not allow us to make faster progress. At Caxito, the paved road came to an abrupt halt and after being stopped at an MPLA roadblock we proceeded on the dirt road at an even slower pace. From time to time we passed the carcass of a burnt-out Russian Army Zil truck. Of course the wheels had been removed, no doubt to be used for someone's trailer.

The Angolans, as I was later to discover, were a friendly fun-loving people. God was kind to them; they lived in a paradise. A coconut would fall from a palm tree and after a short while one had palm wine – a potent drink! The land was extremely fertile, and virtually anything would grow if it was just stuck into the ground. There was also an abundance of wildlife. In southern Angola this was to be severely depleted by the Unita army which needed good food. Among the other creatures occupying this jungle were rats, but more of them later.

We arrived at the garrison and were billeted. The command structure of the ANC camps comprised administration, staff and units. The administration was headed by the camp commander, the camp commissar, who gave guidance to the camp and ensured that political goals were achieved, the chief of staff, who executed and supervised the orders issued by the camp commander, and the recording officer, who was the Mbokodo security chief. In practice, if the camp commander was not from security the recording officer was the *de facto* camp commander. Also part of the administration were the medico, the chief of logistics, who took care of supplies, and the

chief of ordinance, who was responsible for the armoury. Staff comprised the senior officers in the camp, who were responsible for the various operations and units, for example the commander and commissar of the kitchen unit, the commander and commissar of the outpost units, of anti-aircraft guns, of artillery, and of units. The units were companies or platoons, depending on the size of the camp. In training camps all instructors fell under the staff unit. The camps were not very large – typically between sixty and two hundred people. The largest detachment, of six hundred cadres, would arrive after the June 16th 1976 massacre in Soweto.

I was appointed and commissioned as an MK instructor, specialising in sabotage and explosives, by the chief ANC representative, Cassius Make, and his deputy Max Moabi. They also designated me logistics officer. To my surprise, however, shortly after this appointment I became a cook. The leaders of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo, Joe Modise and Mzwai Piliso, visited us and I was ordered to prepare their meals. It crossed my mind as amusing that when, in the future, the freedom war in South Africa was at an end, I could use my new-found talent to be head chef at the Johannesburg Carlton Hotel.

In true communist fashion, Oliver Tambo used to queue for his food, just like any other comrade, and he received the same fare as any other comrade. After eating he also had to wash his plate like the rest of us. Later this was all to change in the name of security; Tambo would receive special treatment and special food, as would the camp administration and the Mbokodo.

I was destined to be stationed at this garrison for almost a year, a reasonably comfortable period, especially since I ate very well.

We trained our recruits in the art of sabotage and in the use of explosives so that by the time we were transferred to another camp in Benguela (April 1977) they were partly qualified to become instructors to a new recruit intake. The prospect did not please them, and they demanded to be allowed to continue and complete their training. In fact, for a few days we had a near riot on our hands. For all our efforts, discipline had not impressed itself on them. At this time we were joined by the Cubans, who supplied more instructors in addition to sorely needed uniforms, logistics, armaments and transport.

The Cubans were happy-go-lucky soldiers. They lived each day as though there was no tomorrow. They were friendly, they liked music, they liked to party and drink and they had no sexual inhibitions! The peasants of Benguela owned a lot of pigs and goats. One of the Cuban

lieutenants found an old Mercedes Benz truck which had been abandoned by a departed Portuguese, and he and a colleague used this to drive around at night and snatch a pig or a goat for the pot. This type of behaviour did not endear the Cubans to the locals. Unfortunately for us, we had been issued with Cuban uniforms and were therefore tarred with the same brush.

In the evenings we used to hear African bongo drums in our camp. The sound came from the hills, and one evening a colleague, Mpanza, and I decided to go and investigate. We were not on the duty roster, and were unarmed when we set off walking towards the hills. By the time we arrived at the small village from which the sound emanated, it was dark. We could hear singing and drumming coming from a large hut which was surrounded by a fence made of stout twisted branches interwoven to form a sturdy kraal.

As soon as we entered the yard, people poured out of the hut and encircled us. They appeared to be hostile. Many of the Angolan men used to carry pangas (or machetes) which were razor sharp. I heard of one incident when an Angolan man who had a grudge against the Cubans went to consult a Cuban doctor. The next patient entered the consulting rooms to find the Cuban doctor headless! We felt uncomfortable and a little apprehensive, but the only path open to us was forward, and we entered the hut to find it deserted except for an Angolan woman and the bongo drum players. A feeble light came from some paraffin lamps. As we entered the hut, the people outside crowded around the door. We greeted the woman and asked her whether we could have a drink. Seeing our Cuban uniforms, she offered us a bottle of locally made rum from a large collection of bottles.

Next to the rum bottles stood a two hundred litre drum of African brew made from fermented maize. (This is similar to sorghum beer which we drink in South Africa and which is a refreshing and nutritious drink.) I indicated to her that I would prefer African beer; she seemed surprised, but she gave me a litre container full of the home brew. I took a sip and then handed the container to Mpanza, saying in Zulu that the beer was good. Immediately I spoke, the ice was broken! Someone cried 'Sul Africanos!' (South Africans!) and the crowd re-entered the hut and came to greet us. Some of the men had been contract mine workers on the South African gold mines and we could communicate with them in Fanagalo. Suddenly everyone was very friendly to us and we were made to feel very welcome.

One day, out of the blue, the group I had been training was moved to Novo Catengue further south. I was one of the nine fully trained comrades who received orders to remain in Benguela. Shortly after

this mysterious move we were visited by MK Commander-in-Chief Joe Modise, who ordered us to proceed to Luanda and appointed me commander of the unit. We packed our kit and made for Luanda, where we spent the night. The following morning, much to our surprise, we were informed that we were to fly to Lusaka, capital of Zambia.

Modise, a Tswana and one of the few non-Xhosas in the ANC command, was one of the few ANC leaders who won my grudging respect, at least at the beginning! He was certainly no angel, but he was a man of his own convictions; a leader, not a follower, and not a Party sycophant. He set a good example: when he visited a camp he wanted to see action, he would check defences, he would work with the cadres and insist that the camp commanders also participate. He was more fair than the other MK officers; he was prepared to listen to you and make his own decision about the matter. He and I got on very well. When he visited Angola he would often come straight to my camp without stopping to be debriefed at ANC regional HQ, as he should have done, and call for Khotso (my MK name). We had long and animated discussions about strategy. Later, when I told the assembled MK at Viana that I considered Modise had failed as army head, he obviously felt betrayed and our relationship changed.

On arrival in Zambia we were met by ZAPU security officers who arranged our clearance into the country because we were not equipped with the necessary travel documents. We were taken into Lusaka and arrived at Zimbabwe House, the political HQ of Joshua Nkomo's exiled Zimbabwe African People's Union. To say we were very impressed with the magnitude of where we were would be an understatement, but we were also exceedingly confused. Having been escorted to a rather luxuriously furnished office or briefing room, the nine of us sat down on comfortable chairs in silence, each of us alone with his thoughts.

After a few minutes the door opened and we were confronted by Joe Modise and Alfred Mangena, the Army Commander of ZIPRA (the armed wing of ZAPU), who brusquely informed us that we had been assigned to ZAPU to assist his instructors. Themba (one of my group) and I were assigned to the office of the Chief of Intelligence (ZAPU) as instructors to train a nucleus of eighteen security men which was to be accountable to the ZAPU President Joshua Nkomo. This training was to be accomplished in three months. It was a very exciting project, but I was disappointed to find that I would not be utilising my training to overcome and remove the real enemy – apartheid and the white racist regime of South Africa. I shrugged this off,

telling myself that was there obviously method in their madness and that it had to be part of the big plan; the plan that I was interested in.

In any event, we moved to a camp eighteen kilometres west of Lusaka together with our ZAPU trainees and successfully fulfilled our mission in the time prescribed. After this we were ordered to transfer to another training base named Membesh, very near to the Zambezi River, which is the boundary between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Across the river Ian Smith's Rhodesian UDI regime ruled.

The Zambezi is one of Africa's great rivers. It is muddy brown and infested with crocodiles and hippopotamuses. At places it is several kilometres wide and flows relatively slowly, while at other locations it rushes in a torrent through narrow near-vertical gorges. Membesh is very remote, in a sparsely populated area teeming with wildlife, including lions and elephant. Even today, on average, one person a day gets eaten by crocodiles in Zimbabwe. Needless to say we did not swim in the Zambezi. Our camp derived its name from the nearby Membesh River, which is a tributary of the Zambezi downstream of Kariba dam. We were bivouacked in some hills adjacent to the river's floodplain, where the savannah grass was taller than a man. To get to the river we would follow the paths made by elephants, of which there were many in the area. During our stay there we had a couple of brushes with wild animals. We had strict orders not to shoot lions as ZIPRA wanted to contain its war to fighting the Ian Smith regime! However, there was an abundance of African buffalo and from time to time one would be shot for the pot.

The buffalo can be a very dangerous animal. On one occasion when a ZIPRA platoon went out to hunt buffalo, they killed one and injured a number of others. Having skinned the dead buffalo, gutted it and cut it into pieces they returned to camp, walking in single file through the tall grass. When they arrived at the camp they noticed that the man who had been at the tail end of the column was missing. It did not concern them too much at first, but after an hour or so they went back to look for him. After hours of searching his body was found hanging like a wet rag from a tree branch. It was thought that one of the wounded buffalo had attacked him, trampled him, gored him and then tossed his body into the tree, as every bone in the poor man's body appeared to have been broken.

A hole was dug in the ground, deep enough to prevent the hyenas from digging up the body. The soldier's body was wrapped in a blanket and then covered with soil. There was no burial service. A few brief political statements were made at the graveside – something to the effect that the armed struggle would continue, as the dead sol-

dier's rifle would be picked up and used by a new recruit.

On another occasion, on a hot afternoon some ZIPRA recruits decided to take a dip in the Membesh River despite the fact that it contained crocodiles. They undressed, left their clothes on a large sandbank and entered the water at a pool which was considered relatively safe. They hadn't been in the water very long when a lion appeared not more than a couple of hundred metres from them. Not long after that a large pack of wild dogs arrived! The recruits by this stage were feeling distinctly uncomfortable, and they were trying to assess whether the crocodiles, the lion or the wild dogs posed the greatest threat. Eventually one of them decided that he was going to take his chances with the lion, and he slowly climbed out of the water, picked up his clothes and inched backwards towards the camp, all the while facing the lion. His comrades followed suit and soon a column of naked ZIPRA recruits was slowly retreating towards camp. To their horror the lion followed them at a distance of thirty metres or so. It stayed in close proximity to the recruits until it was well clear of the pack of wild dogs and then it quickly disappeared into the bush. Perhaps it was seeking the protection of the recruits from the pack of wild dogs.

While we had strict instructions not to kill any lions, no one had said anything about leopards, so that when two new young ZIPRA recruits came across two small leopard cubs, they killed them and ate them. This, of course, was not a very smart thing to do, for the leopard makes a worse enemy than a lion. For many nights after this the poor mother leopard prowled around our camp looking for her cubs. Bivouacked as we were, this was very uncomfortable.

We were briefed that our objective was to train a group of two hundred men in urban guerrilla warfare. A mammoth task under the most favourable conditions, this became a mind blowing feat when it transpired that the men were uneducated rural people. The problem was that not one of my students had ever visited a city or town. They were bush people and they had no experience of what I was talking about when I tried to explain that the objective of my instruction was to teach them how to destroy prime targets that maintain a city or town's existence. I remember thinking that I shouldn't allow the frustration and stupidity of this to get on top of me. 'Make life easy on yourself', I decided, and carried on instructing. The students' faces were a picture as I lectured on the subject of target choices and the areas of weakness and access when sabotaging lifts, escalators, basements, electrical controls and traffic lights. I might just as well have lectured in Russian for all it meant to them and I could foresee the

day when they would be out there as freedom fighters simply blowing themselves up. At the same time my conscience was uneasy because I knew that we were not playing games.

Membesh was a big base in the sense that seven battalions were stationed there, all under training. In addition, there was the 8th Battalion, made up of fully trained men plus a number of supportive units which provided security and defence. Each battalion boasted a strength of between six hundred and eight hundred men. Here Themba and I joined the other MK instructors, only to be separated from them within a day or two and given orders to train the security group. As commander of the MK group of instructors I had to liaise with the camp administration and specifically with the camp commander, to whom I reported all irregularities experienced or observed by our group.

The prevailing mood in Membesh camp was frightening. The Karanga tribe dominated all others and held all the senior posts. They were mainly peasants, they did not like city people, and they were a law unto themselves. They had no respect for life: during bayonet exercises a recruit who was not performing properly was bayoneted to death as an example to the others, and on another occasion I saw a recruit who was trying to scramble out of the Membesh River being kicked to death. The brother of the man killed in the bayonet charge disappeared the same night and it was reported that he had deserted, but later his bullet-riddled body was discovered some fifteen kilometres from the camp.

In addition to these 'tribal' conflicts, there were acute ideological rifts and jealousy as the PLO and Arab-trained men tried to dominate those trained in the USSR. The only thing that kept their desire to overwhelm us, the MK men, under control was simply that we were tops as specialists in various essential disciplines such as artillery, anti-aircraft, sabotage and explosives know-how. On one occasion when I was unarmed I was threatened by the chief of security, apparently because he felt I was soft on recruits, allowing them to listen to the radio and occasionally giving them tobacco, and generally setting a bad example to the other MK instructors. It seemed to me that the recruits could not win. For example, for target practice a recruit would be given ten cartridges for his Serminov rifle: if none of his shots hit the target he would be accused of being an enemy agent trying to sabotage ZAPU's effort to overthrow the Ian Smith regime by wasting ammunition; if, on the other hand, all ten of his shots hit the target then it was obvious that he was a Selous Scout trained by Ian Smith's forces and he was again accused of being an enemy agent.

One of my fellow MK instructors at Membesh was a man named Chris More. Chris was a Sotho, small in stature but big in spirit. He was also a very outspoken person and never hesitated to criticise anything that he perceived to be wrong. Unfortunately, some ill-considered off-the-cuff remarks about ZAPU led him to clash with Alfred Mangena, the ZAPU Army Commander. The enmity between them increased until Chris was suddenly whisked away by ZAPU security to army HQ. Through the grapevine we heard that he had been 'stored away' in a 'black hole' covered by a concrete slab. At the time we were quite unaware of such methods of detention. We never discovered why he had been arrested and by the time we left Membesh we still had no idea of what had happened to him.

We carried on reporting as we had been commanded to do, not intimidated. Shortly after Chris's arrest the seven battalions finished their courses and I completed the special group training of my two hundred recruits. It became apparent to me that my services were no longer required when I was ordered to report to the Camp Commander, who had me disarmed. He then told me to hand in all ZAPU property. Something rang false in the way he issued his orders and I felt that my dismissal had something to do with my having embarrassed the HQ Administration system. At last it got through to me that the ZAPU powers that be did not appreciate any form of criticism, even if it was constructive and honest. Their policy was: 'Tell us what we want to hear – not what we need to know.'

Following this, on behalf of my group, I requested permission to transfer to Lusaka, very careful to make it clear that this was simply because we had completed our mission. Our request was granted by the Camp Commander, who wanted to know what departure time we had in mind. It seemed to me that he couldn't wait to be rid of us, so I suggested that we leave at 0600 hours the following morning. In fact, because we no longer trusted the commanders, my group planned to be on the road at 0130 hours. We almost felt as if we were escaping from a prison.

We knew that the distance to the nearest road from the camp, where we could catch a bus, was approximately fifty-seven kilometres. Our suspicions at the camp were soon substantiated, for as we got close to the road in the mid-afternoon we saw a large group of armed men who my instincts told me were hunting us down. Fortunately we had made it to a populated area so that our pursuers could not do much against us and knew that they would have a war on their hands if we needed to defend ourselves. Their intentions were further corroborated when we discovered that they were a Headquarters sec-

urity platoon led by the Camp Commissar, acknowledged to be a vicious, ruthless man, rumoured to have been involved in many murders of his own comrades. Our timing, deception and stealth had saved our lives. Of that we were certain.

Some time later, having missed the bus as it were, we flagged down a Land Rover. The driver offered us a lift to exactly the place where we wanted to go. It's funny that on the worst day of your life, there's always a bit of luck coming your way. This driver was a Zambian, a very pleasant man. If he ever reads this story I wish him all the best for a peaceful life.

The murderous Camp Commissar now ordered his platoon back to camp and insisted on joining us on our trip, demanding to be dropped at army HQ. This we ignored, eventually reaching our own destination – Zimbabwe House, Lusaka, late at night. Within the next few minutes, however, we were to experience the most shocking confrontation. The Commissar had disappeared quickly into Zimbabwe House while we thanked our Zambian driver friend, and as we turned to enter the building he walked towards us with the ZAPU Chief of Personnel, who ordered us to board an army truck immediately and leave for army HQ.

We refused. They whipped out their pistols and ordered us to do as we were told, instantly. In spite of the threatening situation we still refused. Almost in the same split second we heard the clatter of AK-47s being cocked, saw the two officers step back in wide-eyed fear and slowly lower their pistols in a gesture of surrender. We in turn looked around to see what was going on and to our amazement saw that the HQ political security guards were pointing their AK weapons at the two officers. One of the security guards told them to leave us alone. I then realised that these guards were some of my former students. During their training I had taught them as standard discipline the rules and principles of loyalty, which are that their loyalty was to the party and its ideals, but never to individuals no matter what their seniority or position. If orders went against their conscience or appeared to be issued by an officer for his personal gain or extended beyond the fundamental boundaries of human rights, they did not have to obey them. It was rewarding to witness the application of this principle.

The Commissar and the Chief of Personnel turned and left us, swearing revenge and threatening to have us arrested. The furore had attracted some of the ZAPU Executive Committee, who tried to intervene, but the Commissar and the Chief of Personnel ignored them and left in a huff, muttering heavy threats about our future, telling us

that they would return and that we would pay heavily for humiliating them.

After their departure we discussed our situation and agreed to stay in Zimbabwe House at least for that night. The security guards volunteered to take extra measures to protect us in the event of a surprise attack during the night. We settled down as best we could and slept soundly after our very active and tense twenty-four hours since leaving Membesh Camp.

At about 0430 hours our guardians awakened us and reported that a Russian Zil truck had arrived from army HQ. There was no expected special task force present, only the driver who had courageously made the trip to warn us that a special task group was being prepared to capture us and return us to army HQ. We contacted our ANC HQ staff, telling them that we were leaving Zimbabwe House immediately by truck and would be there within the hour to make a full report on the situation.

We arrived safely and were met by the ANC leadership, in the persons of Treasurer General Titus Nkobi and National Commissar Andrew Masondo. Closeted in a briefing office we told the story in full and they sat silently listening to us as we revealed details of our stay with ZAPU, the situation prevalent in their camps, and the disappearance of Chris More. As we unfolded our experience I could see their eyes widening with surprise.

We finished our report and both men sat completely still as though frozen to their chairs. I sat back and lit a cigarette, waiting for their comments. Masondo stood up slowly, bearing his weight on his arms, moved back from the desk and threw his hands wide as he cleared his throat. He looked round the room, avoiding our silent stares, placed his hands behind his back and slowly paced the floor, chin on chest as though in deep thought. His colleague, Nkobi, sat stiff in his chair with only his eyes moving as he followed Masondo's every twitch and gesture. Suddenly Masondo turned from the only window in the room and with clenched fists came back to his chair. Punching the table top, he looked into our faces and said in a tremulous dry voice, 'I can tell you men now. We have no knowledge that the MK have any instructors assigned to ZAPU.' He continued, 'We are aware that a request for instructors was made by the Executive Committee of ZAPU, but that request was turned down.' It was obvious to everyone that what Joe Modise had done had been without the National Executive Committee's knowledge and against their decision.

Masondo and Nkobi concluded that all the evidence indicated that we were in danger. On the information available, ZAPU obviously

wanted us liquidated. They decided to take responsibility for our safety and have us lodged in an ANC safe house. The procedure would be that we would spend not more than three days at any single house and would be moved on to other secret hideaways until an official posting was established for us.

We lost track of time but at least we lived in comfort and ate well until we were visited by Joe Slovo and Joe Modise. Joe Modise was cool as cucumber. He made no reference to the fact of MK activities with ZAPU. I actually thought that maybe we were guilty of accusing him of something he hadn't done. They informed me that I should prepare my luggage and be ready to depart with them at a minute's notice.

The order to move was issued and together with Modise and a new man, Moses Mabhida (General Secretary of the South African Communist Party), we departed for Maputo, Mozambique.

4. Maputo, Camp 13 and a 'secret project'

A few days after my arrival in Maputo I requested permission from Modise to visit my sisters in Swaziland. He approved and I left. This time I was equipped with legal documents and some money. It really felt good to be 'legitimate' and travelling in a relaxed manner for a change. Having given permission, Modise had instructed the ANC Chief Representative to facilitate all my needs for the visit. My sister had informed my family and relations that I would be visiting and so I looked forward to a memorable gathering and happy celebrations for a few short days and nights. I planned to make the most of it, because I knew it would probably be a very long time before we'd meet again, if indeed I survived whatever it was that the future held for me.

In Swaziland I met up with some old friends. I also met new comrades who had arrived from Angola and we spent a few hours talking about our experiences. Their stories were disturbing – especially as they provided most unwelcome corroboration of some of my own suspicions and apprehensions. They told me that the June 16th Detachment had started its training in 1976 and completed the course in 1977. To their consternation they were then ordered to repeat the same training course. As a group they refused, saying that they would only agree to advanced or specialised training. Alternatively they demanded to be sent back home to South Africa to fight against the apartheid regime. The ANC leadership refused permission and told them that they had to stay in the camp until further notice. They did as they were told but time went by and they were left uninformed and ignored. Dissension grew and they became very frustrated. This developed into a state of breakdown, with friends fighting and killing friends. It was rumoured that the ANC leadership did not want the camps empty because they were receiving a lot of money (millions of dollars) in the form of aid from sympathetic international support

groups which would certainly stop financial aid to non-existent cadres. The bulk of these funds, my friends alleged, was being siphoned-off into the private bank accounts of elements of the ANC leadership, leaving very little to benefit the rank and file. Moreover, to cover the misappropriation of those funds and ensure their financial future, the ANC presented the genuine and growing dissension as mutiny caused by the common enemy, the capitalistic, apartheid driven South African regime. Overnight, fourteen men were detained, charged as agitators and ringleaders of what the ANC leadership termed a mutiny, and sentenced to six months' hard labour.

The cells at this particular camp, Quibaxe in Bhengu province, were located in a basement which filled with diesel smoke when the generator was switched on in the evenings. The walls, roof and floor were lined with a heavy layer of soot. One of the officers who attempted to lock them in this black hole was Ronnie Kasrils. He was lucky to escape being lynched, for the whole camp rose up as one, wanting to free the prisoners, but were talked out of their intention by the ANC authorities.

With these tales of horror ringing in my ears I was recalled to Maputo urgently and didn't get to meet my sisters and family after all. I was not to see them again for twelve years.

The manner of my recall was typical of the military mind. I found on my return to Maputo that I had to hang around because there wasn't anything for me to do. A few days later I was appointed political instructor to a bunch of new recruits and told to acquaint them with ANC policy.

One night towards the end of 1978, I and a certain Comrade Azania, both of us staying in a residence in Matola, went to the local cinema and later called in at the Frelimo Youth Club, which was on our way home. I had many friends there and looked forward to meeting them for a lively political discussion over a beer or two. We were made welcome and settled down among our friends, some of whom were on the National Youth Executive Committee. A couple of them bought us a crate of beer from which we drank two bottles each, after which we decided to leave for home, taking the remaining beers with us.

Arriving at our quarters in a very relaxed state of mind, we became aware of the car belonging to the Regional Chief Security Officer, Peter Raboroko, with a Frelimo Land Rover waiting behind it. Raboroko got out of his car and motioned towards the Land Rover, out of which spilled a group of armed Frelimo soldiers. They walked up to us and Raboroko grabbed the crate of beer, ordering us to get

to bed and go to sleep. Wondering what this was all about, I demanded that he return the beer, which by this time he had loaded into his car. Raboroko laughed, and in what I took to be a not unfriendly manner, suggested that if we wanted to have a drink we should come and join him in his car. The heat of the moment dissipated and thinking nothing of it Azania and I got into the car. Before we had settled into our seats Raboroko accelerated hard and we took off, the Land Rover full of soldiers following us.

Shortly afterwards we screeched to a stop outside a police station. The Frelimo soldiers hustled us out of the car and up to the charge office. Sitting on a wooden bench was a member of the ANC National Executive named Mance who (we found out later) pretended that Raboroko had brought him to the police station a little earlier and that he had no idea of what was going on. We explained our situation to him but in spite of his executive rank he appeared to be powerless. Raboroko arrived and ordered us back into his car in an extremely arrogant manner. Without saying a word he drove us back to Maputo where we wound along the poorly lit streets and eventually came to a stop in front of a large gate. This was opened by armed soldiers to allow the car to drive into a prison courtyard. The situation had taken on a very ominous tone.

Raboroko had us shuffled into the reception area and prison staff started filling out warrant of imprisonment documents as Raboroko told them in Portuguese to write that we had been arrested for *Sao Indisciplinado* (undisciplined conduct). The documents were quickly completed and rubber-stamped, whereupon four guards grabbed us and pushed us to the cells. Sitting on the floor of our cell were three familiar looking prisoners—former inmates of our residence.

Three and half months went by. We discovered that the prison was named Commando and that it overlooked Maputo harbour and dockyard, but every time we asked the guards why we were there and how long would it be before we were released, or demanded that our leaders come and talk to us, we ran into a barrage of threats and abuse. Eventually, when the Chief of Police for Maputo Province did his rounds and discovered us, he had us immediately released on the grounds that we had been illegally detained under Mozambican law.

We were very thankful to be released and made no protest. Although the Chief of Police had been kind to us, we had seen the former superintendent and some officials of this very same prison who were themselves imprisoned and held in basement cells. (We discovered later that these detained men were prison officials and agents of the 'secret police' of Salazar and Caetano, the former leaders of

Portugal.) So we had no intention of giving the police chief second thoughts about us. One could quite easily disappear without trace in a place like this! Our official release followed and we were given a letter to hand over to the ANC Chief Representative Lennox.

To our relief we didn't have long to wait in Matola, because on 1 January 1979 we were sent back to Angola, totally confused by what seemed to us to have been a ridiculous waste of time, talent and motivation. But more, much more was to come. In fact, if I had had any idea of what was ahead of me, I would have returned to South Africa immediately.

Twenty-four hours after our arrival in Luanda we were called to meet ANC President Oliver Tambo, who told us that he was concerned about our incarceration in Mozambique and would set up a commission of inquiry to investigate our case. The commission was made up of Cassius Make and Andrew Masedo, both members of the ANC National Executive. Masedo's participation impressed us since, as National Commissar, he was the third most important and powerful man in the ANC. We were assured that whatever decision they arrived at would be in our best interest and that the top echelon of the ANC appreciated our dedication.

Shortly after the meeting we were served our orders to proceed north to Quibaxe, where the camp 'Villa Rosa' (codename Camp 13) was located. We duly reported to the Commandant's HQ, where I was posted to the construction unit. With the assurance of the commissioners' words I accepted the posting quite happily. A few days later we were assigned to a former coffee plantation some three kilometres from Camp 13. Inside the perimeter of this plantation was a rectangular compound (a former hostel for African plantation workers) in which there was a large building comprising kitchen, dining room and store room, topped by a large water reservoir. We settled down in the compound, having been told that under no circumstances would we be allowed to go to Camp 13, nor would Camp 13 personnel be allowed to come near this compound. Our unit leader's name was Douglas. We discovered that what he was responsible for was a top secret project. We were there to build a 'rehabilitation centre', a place where enemy agents and comrades who were guilty of serious offences and breaches of discipline were to be 're-educated'. On completion of the project we were under oath to forget we had ever been there.

The construction process was pitifully slow because of our lack of building materials and equipment. We collected river sand from crevices in the rutted road where it had been washed by rain storms.

Water had to be collected in buckets from the spring and carried up the hill. Timber had to be cut from the bush and dressed. Concrete had to be mixed by hand. The air of secrecy surrounding the project somehow made the atmosphere extremely ominous and mistrust pervaded the unit. Among ourselves we frequently spoke in Portuguese because Commander Douglas and his assistant Mangaung could not understand the language. Mangaung, whom we named 'running dog', was only a recruit, having never completed his military training. He had actually been one of my students in political orientation back in Matola in 1978. Now here he was, the commander's spy in our midst.

I was the only one of the group who was trained, militarily qualified and experienced. This resulted in my appointment to officer in charge of defence and security strategy for the project, because it was known that the FNLA was still operational in the area. Using features of the terrain, I had to design a defensive array of trenches and minefields and identify defensive strengths and weaknesses.

In this respect the outer walls of the 'rehabilitation centre' left much to be desired. Douglas recommended that the existing compound walls be strengthened by means of an outer wall bonded to the existing old wall by mortar and steel. The major problem was that the ventilation and windows of the outer walls of the rooms which comprised the perimeter of the compound would have to be bricked in for security reasons. Compounding the problem was the fact that almost all of the rooms were to be allocated as prison and isolation cells. Douglas had provided some three-inch asbestos pipes, but we felt that without some more acceptable form of ventilation for the future unlucky occupants, given the prevailing heat, we stood a very good chance of turning a rehabilitation centre into a death camp.

Ephraim Nkondo (brother of Curtis Nkondo of UDF fame), a friend and my chosen assistant, requested a meeting with Commander Douglas and we presented him with alternative ideas as to how we could resolve the ventilation problem and retain maximum security. Douglas's reaction was an explosive outburst. 'You're not being asked to build a holiday camp, your job is simple,' he screamed. 'Safeguard the camp, that is the major objective, and to hell with the prisoners!' Cooling down a bit, he explained that he wanted an 'American' style of prison. I responded by telling him that films I had seen of American prisons showed no relationship with what he had in mind. I went on to say that if this was intended to be a re-education centre, it should be built as a shining example for racist regimes to see how to do it properly.

I realised that our outspokenness had made us an enemy. Douglas

dismissed us with a curt order to complete the job as instructed, and a warning that in future I should remember that to refer to the camp as a prison was a punishable offence. Later, when the National Commissar, Andrew Masondo, arrived to inspect our handiwork, Commander Douglas reported that we had been critical of the education centre's design and architecture. We were called to the office to discuss the matter with Masondo and the discussion turned into an argument, but even at the hottest point we would not back down on the fundamental principle of our point of view. He had his way, however, by sending us back to Camp 13, labelled as dissidents.

We returned to Camp 13 with Masondo in his transport. On arrival we were told to pitch our tent in the centre of an open area which in old colonial times had been used to dry coffee-beans. (In January 1979 when I had first arrived at this camp. I had noticed that one of the buildings surrounding this ground was a chapel that must have been used by the original plantation owner, his family and staff for Sunday mass and other religious needs. Now it had been desecrated and vandalised. Not long thereafter the entire chapel was destroyed.) Life now became difficult. The National Commissar had given orders that Ephraim Nkondo and I were to be isolated. All comrades at the camp were to ignore us and faced punishment if they were seen talking to us. We were forbidden to go to the library, let alone borrow books, and we were banned from attending meetings of any kind. It was not long before the authorities came to our tented area and left with Ephraim. He was to become one of the first inmates – and, indeed, eventually a victim – of 'Quatro Camp' which was now the name of the ex-coffee plantation compound where I had started my new building trade. (Quatro – so named in memory of the Fort prison in Johannesburg, which was known as 'Number Four' by South Africa's political prisoners – was officially referred to as Camp 32, or Morris Seabolo Camp.)

Ephraim's removal was more sinister than anything I had experienced since leaving South Africa. Now I was completely isolated. Moreover I was stricken with malaria and a high fever laid me out absolutely flat, totally incapable of even getting off my bed. I didn't eat or leave my tent for two days and it took that long for a comrade named Connie to realise that I was missing. At night on the third day he ignored the isolation orders and came quietly to see if I was in need of help. Discovering that I was delirious and appeared to be at death's door he carried me to the clinic for treatment. He also organised food for me. This courageous action, together with the clinic treatment, pulled me through and I quickly recovered.

However, I still had to finish my six months' isolation. The punishment was ended when the Camp Commander and the Commissar called me to the office. The first thing they asked was why I had pitched my tent right in the middle of the area to which I had been designated. I told them I had no reason for this action and asked them if I had committed another crime. They both smiled and informed me that being exposed on open ground could have made me an obvious and juicy target for the South African Air Force, which earlier that year had made an air strike and razed one of our camps (Novo Catengue) in Southern Angola. I thought about this back-handed advice but didn't ask them why they hadn't warned me earlier: perhaps they had hoped the SAAF would save them a heap of trouble.

Next, in a strangely schizophrenic about-face, I was appointed secretary of the ANC Youth in Camp 13. For a week I occupied a dugout, then was told to pack my bags and proceed to another camp, Fazenda, situated further north across the Rio Donge.

In Portuguese, Fazenda means farm or plantation. Most of the people sent to establish this camp were members of the original June 16th Detachment who had participated in the so-called mutiny back at Novo Catengue Camp in Benguela Province in 1978. The balance of the staff was made up of people considered to be disloyal to the ANC leadership but not to the ANC's cause. The FNLA operated in the Fazenda area (Uige Province) and rumours were rife at this time that the ANC policy makers hoped that our MK and the FNLA would attack each other, but this never happened. (On another front, MK personnel had been sent to Zambia to join forces with ZAPU, which in turn was being infiltrated into Rhodesia. Here most of them perished at the hands of the Smith forces on the one hand and those of Robert Mugabe on the other.)

Sometimes I would feel claustrophobic in the camp and I would walk along the paved road to the Rio Donge bridge, which was manned by MPLA soldiers. On one particular occasion I suddenly had the eerie feeling that I was being watched by many pairs of eyes – I suspected they were FNLA eyes – but could see nothing in the impenetrable bush. I could have sworn that I smelt tobacco smoke too, which heightened my sense of unease. In the bush one's senses are far sharper – I have on occasion heard the engine of a truck that must have been fifty kilometres away.

By and large, we had a fairly amicable relationship with the FNLA even though they were the enemy of our friends. Some MK cadres established contact with FNLA who helped them to escape from

Fazenda to Zaire by way of trails they had established through the bush, with cassava planted at regular intervals to provide troops with food.

Meanwhile, the few MK members left at Fazenda, totally unaware of the disastrous fate of their comrades in Rhodesia, were becoming restless and frustrated by the unvarying routine and miserable conditions under which they existed. They had been promised that they would be infiltrated back into South Africa after undergoing yet another survival course, but instead they remained in an area rife with tsetse fly, mosquito and a notorious insect which causes 'river blindness'. The crushing boredom, severe deprivation, lack of purpose and brutal punishments for minor infractions, together with the realisation that the Command promises were empty, caused the cadres to become angry and defiant towards the camp administration. Open disobedience became the order of the day.

On a typical day in the camps, a cadre would be awoken at 0500 hours. He would drag himself from his sleeping bag to face another day of boring routine, in the company of the same faces, thousands of kilometres from home. To brighten the day some would surreptitiously slip into the bush to light up a 'zoll' of dagga and tea leaves. Only the Mbokodo received tobacco and cigarettes.

Next, the cadre would tidy up his sleeping quarters in the underground dugout and hang his sleeping bag out to dry. The mist was so intense that by morning everything was sodden and many cadres suffered from pneumonia and TB, for which scant medical treatment was available. At 0600 hours he would line up for breakfast, which would be 'pap' without milk or sugar.

After breakfast he would be told, for the umpteenth time, that the dugouts had been incorrectly positioned and that they would have to be moved (*the hard labour keeps the comrades occupied and takes their minds off their problems*). Midday, and dirty and sweaty, the men would assemble for a spartan lunch of rice and tinned meat – probably World War II Russian rations, which had expired.

After lunch would come a self-criticism session. By now, of course, the cadre should have learnt what type of criticism was permissible. Only a brave or foolish comrade would ask a stupid question like, 'When are we going home to fight the enemy?' (*The leaders will know when the time is ripe, revolutionaries must be patient and disciplined*.) 'Thought crimes' are easy to commit. Comrades must not womanise, imbibe liquor or go to the village to buy dagga. Those men who have been tied to the trees night and day for the last month or so, did.

Finally it's supper time again: the menu is the same as for lunch, but substitute expired tinned fish for lunchtime's meat. (The Mbokodo and the admin staff ate goat's meat and fresh vegetables.) The blood-red fireball sun rapidly sets, and to the raucous sounds of an Mbokodo party in progress, our hero may decide to slip into the bush again to enjoy a last 'zoll' before he retires – it will help him to sleep, despite the clouds of ravenous mosquitoes. In this productive manner some cadres spent two decades of the flower of their youth, advancing the ANC's cause.

Effectively the authorities lost control of the MK cadres. This was what confronted me when I arrived at Fazenda. My good fortune was that most of the MK men knew me from the time when I had trained them and as a result I was able to assert some discipline. I immediately set about reviving a Youth Committee structure to help build mutual confidence between the troops and the demoralised command administration. Through the Youth Committee I was able to rekindle self-respect amongst the men in order to re-establish their hopes and dignity. We eliminated dagga smoking, for example, and set about getting the men involved in constructive activities including adult education and self-improvement programmes. These were nowhere near university level but what we achieved was miraculous. In just a few weeks we had turned the attitude of the lads around; they had become a proud, disciplined unit.

The powers that be had to take cognisance of the fact that bully-boy tactics would never be the way to create an efficient army – after all, it was to fight against the abuse of power that we had left our homes in South Africa in the first place.

It seemed that the news of the turnaround had spread to other command posts and reached the hallowed halls of the ANC leadership, for shortly thereafter, early in 1980, we were visited by National Commissar Andrew Masondo, who was chairman of the commission appointed by Oliver Tambo to investigate the Mozambique episode.

Masondo informed me that the commission was delighted with our results and that we were totally absolved of all charges laid against us in Mozambique. He also advised that the leadership had indicated that we should bear no grudges against those who had detained us: they would 'put the matter straight' on our behalf. I was surprised and pleased to be told that he commended me for my 'good and selfless work at Fazenda'.

Towards the end of his visit, Andrew Masondo addressed the camp – a typical executive 'pep-talk' which soothed the anger but confused all the men. Unbeknown to me at the time, in 1980, the ANC did not

renew its contract with the Cubans for training of the MK. Apparently the Cubans had asked some embarrassing questions, like 'When does the MK plan to attack South Africa?' As a result, in 1981 and 1982 the quality of training in the MK deteriorated substantially.

In the second half of 1980, Mzwandile Piliso, ANC chief of security, arrived and instructed us to pack our kit and belongings. We had to be ready to move back to Camp 13, as it was being vacated by almost its entire personnel for another camp (Pango) and we in Fazenda would be taking over.

While this was happening we heard that the South African government had discovered remnants of our MK men fighting in Rhodesia and had protested to the Rhodesian Authority (Lord Soames, the governor). They were deported to Zambia by a British force monitored by the SADF. Our MK troops were lucky to be alive and when they were eventually deposited in Lusaka they were treated with disdain. They were completely disillusioned with the ANC leadership, which they angrily said was non-existent. In Rhodesia they realised that their leaders couldn't care less about their fate, but when, in Zambia, they compared their indifferent attitudes with the reasonable treatment they had received from their enemies and, moreover, saw with their own eyes ANC elitists living in luxury, the boys from the bush were outraged. Many of the MK cadres had been drilled in 'communist ideology' of the Soviet/East European brand, in which luxuries were taboo, and they were unable to accept that the financial support for the ANC's cause was being used to buy a lavish lifestyle for its leaders.

The boys from the bush demanded to know from these ANC fat cats why they had to risk their lives for another country while their own country was still not liberated. The MK was now splitting into two armies, the latent army of rebels which seethed beneath an apparently calm and obedient surface, and the army of the leaders, the Mbokodo, who had preference in everything from military uniforms and boots to opportunities for receiving the best military, political and educational training overseas.

As we would discover in the long months ahead, the leaders had the answer but they were not divulging anything. However, they came up with one of their many delaying tactics: a detachment conference.

These detachment conferences were seen to be democratic events but, in my opinion, were a big sham. Each detachment held its own, in which the men were given the 'democratic right' to elect their own leaders. The conference was then thrown open to the floor for frank

and open discussions centred around problems and grievances of any aspect of the ANC soldier's life. Finally, resolutions and agreements would be noted and drawn up as proposals to be put before the National Executive Committee.

The supreme leaders were also member soldiers of various army detachments. Under army protocol Tambo, Nzo and Modise belonged to the Luthuli detachment and therefore attended their detachment's conference in Luanda as soldiers bearing their officially recognised detachment rank, be it sergeant or major. Theoretically, during the period of the detachment conference they carried no rank. They were entitled, as was everyone else, to put forward complaints, problems and grievances, which of course they never did. What they did do most emphatically, I suspected, was listen to the rank and file's comments and make copious notes under the title 'dissension and dissidents'.

The detachment conferences were called for October 1980. The three detachments concerned were Luthuli, June 16th (my old trainees) and Moncada. As a member of a Special Detachment, I was not invited. (The Luthuli detachment was named for the former ANC president and Nobel Peace prize winner; the June 16th Detachment was named for the Soweto riots which had produced most of the volunteers for that detachment, and the Moncada Detachment was named for the Moncada barracks in Santiago, which Fidel Castro attacked with a hundred and ten guerrillas on 26 July 1953 in his first bid to overthrow Batista. Castro was captured, tried and sent to the Isle of Pines. This was done to honour the Cubans for their help to the ANC.)

After the conferences, the NEC leaders, having studied the minutes, bought more time by issuing a statement that they would re-address the whole issue in December. The delay seemed logical because it was known that full NEC meetings were due to be held to review the strategies for the coming year and that the annual statement would be read by the ANC President around 8 January 1981. The men constituting the three detachments resigned themselves to a long wait with reasonable dignity and patience.

In January, prior to the expected date of the President's Conference and anticipated findings, we trekked once more to Pango Camp. January 8th arrived and we spent the day in a state of high expectancy. By late afternoon we realised that we couldn't expect news of the President's decisions immediately. A few days passed and we started asking questions and pushing our local commanders for the results and findings of the President's Conference.

Alas, it never happened, because on 9 January 1981 the news filtered through that the South African Defence Force had attacked the ANC residence in Matola, Mozambique, advancing eighty kilometres into the country without being challenged by any Frelimo troops. The result was chaos amongst the ANC leaders, who used the incident as an excuse to silence all opposition, dissenters and critics. What ensued was a massive purge throughout the entire ANC, based on the claim that enemy agents and ANC traitors had worked with the SADF to make the Matola attack possible. We realised then that the detachment conferences and the leaders' promises to put matters right were a complete sham. Even if the incursion of the SADF had not happened, nothing would have been done to remedy the troops' complaints. In fact it was intended all along to purge the dissidents rather than answer their accusations.

Although we did not know it at the time, our move from Camp 13 to Pango was in preparation for the cadres' big purge. Camp 13 became an extension of Quatro and only security personnel remained there.

5. The Viana Papers and the Mkatashinga mutiny

In 1981 began a time of terror and death for ANC members in exile. In February a strong ANC National Executive Committee entourage which included President Tambo made the rounds of all ANC camps in Angola. Cadres were warned of the presence of a spy network and the need for vigilance was emphasised. Enemy agents and provocateurs were rudely warned by Piliso, in Xhosa, '... I'll hang them by their balls'. An 'internal enemy' psychosis had been whipped up and whenever ANC leaders visited camps they were heavily guarded. Many men and women apprehended on suspicion of dissidence were to be exterminated in the most brutal manner in the months ahead. Those disillusioned MK cadres who returned from Rhodesia were the first to go.

I became aware of these developments by word of mouth, but I was to discover later on, by personal experience, the terror of Quatro, to name but one death camp. People were removed from amongst us – taken to Quatro or Camp 13 – and disappeared forever without reason. Many of them were slaughtered by one means or another, and their ultimate destination was a shallow grave. We heard rumours of execution by being buried alive, amongst many other techniques beyond civilised imagination. The purge created great fear amongst all of us, to the point where the smallest criticism, such as of badly prepared food, was seriously reconsidered by every individual, for one could never be certain that a 'best friend' would keep his mouth shut. The fact that we did not know who the communist informers amongst us were heightened our fear and sense of isolation.

Our own security people became exceedingly arrogant, to the point where an innocent slip of the tongue or even a simple gesture could land you in a torture cell at Quatro. Security men of the lowest rank

and intelligence – fourteen to eighteen year olds – became our masters, with the power of life or death in their hands. They acted on a mood with impunity.

Serious misgivings festered in my mind and in this I was not alone. But even more tribulation was around the corner. A little later, Moses Mabhida, the General Secretary of the SACP, visited Angola and made a bloodcurdling speech which was taped and sent to all the camps. He carried on about the fact that certain elements of the ANC smoked dagga and purchased alcohol and other items from local villages, claiming that this had been delivered by the enemy to destabilise us. He warned us that the authorities of the ANC would deal with comrades mercilessly to stamp out this indiscipline, even calling upon commanders to shoot offenders.

In April 1981, commissions were established under the auspices of camp commanders and the Mbokodo to investigate these alleged breaches of discipline. Critics of the ANC leaders were labelled 'anti-authority'. During the duration of the investigation they were tied to trees where they were also left to sleep, sometimes for weeks on end. More terror was unleashed on the camps. Now men were no longer dispatched to Quatro or Camp 13, they were subjected to total horror in front of their compatriots in the camps where they resided. Fear was instilled, and hatred of the Mbokodo crystallised.

We in Pango Camp were spared the killing. The Viana transit camp drivers and the security men who accompanied them were our newsmen. When they came to deliver stores we would hear how innocent men were arrested on a whim by the Mbokodo, subjected to torture until they confessed to the crime of dagga smoking or bartering an article of clothing for fresh vegetables and then executed on a thumbs-down gesture, the way history tells us that the Roman emperors dispatched Christians. Before execution, however, the accused man was forced to write a list of names of colleagues who also smoked dagga or still went shopping in a village. Those on the lists would then be taken and subjected to security bestiality until they died or came back crippled for life. The transit camp drivers brought tales of men demented, blind in one eye or terribly bruised and cut. If they were lucky they might receive some sort of medical help; if they were really lucky, they died. Others returned and committed suicide. This wave of terror engulfed the entire MK, and underground interrogation houses were set up in all places where the ANC had personnel, from Angola to Mozambique. In 1982 and 1983 the rate of desertions grew dramatically.

Oliver Tambo visited Pango at the height of the terror. The path

from the entrance to the admin building was lined – like a scene from ‘Spartacus’ – with men, bloodied and filthy, hanging from trees. When his entourage arrived at admin, where I was officer on duty, Tambo’s chief of staff told us that there would be a meeting at ‘the stage’ (a clearing in the jungle in which we had built a platform and placed rows of logs to sit on, where we held meetings and discussions). Runners were sent out to notify everyone in the vicinity. On his way to the stage OT again passed the men tied to trees. Being officer on duty, I could not attend the meeting, but my deputy went. After a while I saw guards come up from the stage, release the prisoners and take them to the meeting. There, my deputy told me, instead of objecting to their treatment, as I had hoped, Tambo berated them for their dissident behaviour and appeared to approve when Andrew Masondo declared that on the president’s next visit they would be in shallow graves behind the stage. The prisoners were returned to their trees (I, at my post, assuming optimistically that Tambo, reluctant to undermine the camp commander’s authority by releasing them there and then, would leave instructions on his departure for them to be taken down in a day or two), but the president passed the unfortunate men without a glance on his way out, and they hung there for another three months – followed by three months’ hard labour.

Tambo was a brilliant and ruthless man. I believe that if his and Mandela’s roles in history had been reversed, the ANC would have collapsed. Fate was kind to the ANC, for Mandela made an excellent martyr, while Tambo was the tough relentless leader who held the ANC together during its darkest hours before the 1976 Soweto riots. Tambo had the mannerisms of an English gentleman; he had fully adopted English culture, which belied his ‘tough as nails’ character. After his appointment as acting president of the ANC at the 1969 Morogoro Conference, a power struggle developed. In 1975, eight members of the leadership were purged, accused of being tribalists and factionalists. The next ANC national conference would not occur until 1985 at Kabwe. (Conferences were held in 1971 and 1975 but they were not empowered to change the executive.) Tambo effectively became a dictator. He co-opted his cronies into the ruling clique, and in 1977, without calling for a consultative conference, declared himself president. A typical crony was Andrew Masondo, National Commissar, whose main function it was to brainwash cadres into unquestioning acceptance of decisions made by the leadership. His favourite saying was, ‘Yours is not to reason why; yours is but to do or die’. A Tambo hero cult was promoted and cadres were re-

quired to sing his praises in a reverent manner as though sacred hymns were being sung. Even salutations changed. 'Comrade Mzwai' (Piliso, head of ANC security) became 'Tata' (father). It was no longer permitted to address members of the NEC as 'comrade'; the Mbokodo required that they be called 'comrade leader'. Gradually, the Mbokodo tried to instil in cadres the belief that the ANC leadership was infallible, and any cadre who refused to voluntarily accept this premise was coerced by threats. Mzwai Piliso summed up this approach when he said: 'If you as much as point a finger at the ANC leadership, we will chop off your whole arm.'

The purge eventually burnt itself out, but the soldiers were afraid and lacked enthusiasm and trust. As a commissar in charge of outpost units and political instruction I had escaped the wrath of the leadership, much to my surprise. I felt great compassion for the soldiers and tried to lead them out of their lethargy and fear. I worked my heart out but didn't succeed as I had hoped. The mental wounds would take a long time to heal.

In any liberation movement the commissar and political instructor is considered to be the main source of guidance to a field commander's decisions. If a commander's decision is deemed to be incompatible with the political policy of the central organisation, the commander must reconsider his decision and re-align himself with the policy or change his decision. This of course was the classic method perfected by the Soviet Union. Even the captain of a Russian submarine, for example, was under the political guidance of the on-board political appointee from the KGB. While the ANC did adopt this method, the commissar's advice, more often than not, went unheeded: the security men were a law unto themselves. Often a diligent commissar fell victim to the security forces for doing his job correctly, that is, by ignoring political policy to achieve military objective. It wasn't long before commissars started to lose their confidence.

Odd as it may seem, life in the MK was not completely without humour. On 1 April 1982, the commander of the kitchen and logistics unit sent word to an overweight one-eyed cadre whom we called 'Lefura' which means a piece of dripping fat. Lefura and some others were to report to the guardhouse immediately with all their belongings. This usually meant *MChina*, i.e. departure for the front. (The term derived from Chinaman, because in South Africa the Chinese run a numbers game called 'farfi', which is quite popular. If the Chinaman draws your number you are lucky – you win, you escape the boredom and mistrust of camp life.) Lefura and his colleagues re-

ceived our best wishes as they departed. Of course when they reported at the guardhouse with full kit they discovered it was an April Fool's prank!

Some relief came my way in June 1982 when I was elected as a delegate to represent our camp at a Regional Youth Conference in Luanda. The highlight of the conference would be the grand celebration marking June 16th (Soweto day) at a banquet hall in the prestigious college in Luanda which children of the MPLA hierarchy attended.

I was due to return to Pango shortly afterwards, but just before my departure from Luanda I was summoned to the offices of Julius Makoene, our Regional Commander. He advised me that I would not be returning to Pango as he had another task for me. I was to remain in Luanda until my orders came through. I dared not ask him about my future because I still feared that even a simple question would be interpreted as insolence and earn a visit by the security boys. Instead I asked permission to go back to Pango and pick up my belongings and clothes. Sharply he refused, saying that they would be collected and sent to me. I then requested that I be allowed to wait for his orders out at Viana transit camp, about twenty-five kilometres out of town, explaining that I wasn't happy about staying at the residence. He had no objection to my request and so I proceeded to Viana.

Having established myself in Viana, history repeated itself. The regional chief of construction asked me to assist him with his building projects in Luanda. I agreed, mainly because working with him would help make the time go by faster and working would keep me fit. Taking this job meant I needed to commute daily between Viana and Luanda, which gave me the opportunity to meet other people and talk about outside events. I stayed at Viana until October and as there was plenty going on around me, I had an opportunity to escape the memories of the purge period at Pango.

During October 1982 a directive arrived at all the camps and residences. Over the signature of Oliver Tambo, it urged us to review the ANC's past activities, achievements and failures, assess its strategy and tactics and then make positive suggestions towards pin-pointing the way to go forward. In Viana we entered into daily serious debates, sometimes bitter but realistic and, for the first time, in a friendly and comradely spirit. It took two weeks to process our answers and suggestions.

Meetings were held every night in the camp hall after supper and went on until midnight most nights. The Camp Commissar, Siphon Mtswana, chaired the meetings and he and James Makhaya compiled

and typed the complaints raised by the cadres. The typed version was ratified or amended at the next meeting. Approximately three hundred cadres from Viana participated in the meetings, which took the form of debates, and there were another hundred or so observers who came from camps in the vicinity of Quatro. The hall could not accommodate all these people simultaneously, so people came and went after they had made their contributions.

Detailed accusations were made against certain ANC leaders, but we felt that it would not be correct to name any of them in the main body of the report, which ran to some thirty-five typed pages: a commission should be held to investigate the malpractices. Cadres were permitted to annex specific complaints or accusations that they had against a particular leader. These were treated in a confidential manner: the complainant would submit his written accusation to the commissar. I am aware that Selby Dlamini prepared a written complaint against Jacob Zuma, because he discussed it with me.

The report pulled no punches, despite its tactful approach. There was general consensus that the ANC in exile had lost focus and there was widespread disenchantment with its leaders. A consultative conference was called for, to elect new leaders who would be charged with getting the ANC back on track. The cadres were floundering in fetid Angolan camps while the leaders were wallowing in luxury in Lusaka. There was very strong evidence that ANC funds were being misappropriated for the personal use of leaders, many of whom had acquired expensive real estate in foreign countries. An audit of ANC funds was demanded. Corruption was rampant: some ANC leaders were using ANC personnel and facilities to indulge in illegal activities such as drug smuggling, car theft and illicit diamond dealing, while others abused their positions to gain sexual favours from young female cadres. The liberation of South Africa was being incompetently prosecuted, there was widespread tribalism and nepotism. Transkei Xhosas had preferential treatment. In the department of health, for example, people with the right connections would be flown to Europe to be treated for minor ailments, while in the camps seriously ill people had only the most primitive health care.

The Mbokodo were severely criticised. The security arm of the ANC had originally comprised a few old cadres from the 1960s, and was a relatively benign organisation in those years. In the mid- to late 1970s it was reorganised and greatly expanded with young men who had been trained in the Soviet Union and East Germany. These had become a law unto themselves, whipping up an 'internal enemy'

psychosis in order to suppress all dissension and criticism in the camps, no matter how trivial. Quatro, that hell-hole, had to be closed.

I was one of the more vociferous speakers, but strong disenchantment was widespread among the cadres, many of whom believed that most of the wrongdoings in the ANC happened without the knowledge of Oliver Tambo, and that if he were given a clear picture of the situation he would hasten to put matters right.

The National Commissar, Masondo, was located in our region for the period of these deliberations and had been receiving daily reports on our progress from the security officers. His job was to collect the reports resulting from the conference at all the camps and deliver them to the ANC President's office in Lusaka.

Before leaving for Lusaka he convened a meeting in Viana and took the opportunity to be very critical of the report for which we had been responsible. His eyes bored into me like laser beams. They conveyed both anger and, I believe, fear. I knew then that I was looking at a bleak future. He lashed out at me personally and told me that I should take cognisance of the fact that trying to be a 'Lech Walesa' would be to my detriment: if I persisted in rocking the boat I would be crushed. My response was that I was not making trouble for anyone and that the report-back was an honest and truthful statement of the facts as we knew them to be. He angrily retorted: 'You should be very careful, because at times, truth and facts are very destructive and should be avoided.' To say I was stunned is an understatement. I sat back in my chair completely deflated.

Not long afterwards I and eleven other men were transferred out of Viana and put to work clearing an area of bush to prepare the land for building development. This place was to be given the name The Plot. It was located fifteen kilometres from Viana and twenty-five kilometres from Luanda. To my surprise (as I had prepared myself for a security 'visit' after Masondo's attack on me), I was made responsible for the project.

At The Plot, we were to build a training hospital, four warehouses, a number of dormitories, a garage and medical staff quarters. All this was started at the end of November 1982.

Alongside our activities the NEC annual meeting was taking place in Lusaka. This meeting was marked by anger and panic amongst the leaders, caused by our document (which would be named the Viana Papers) and its exposure of the generally defiant and critical mood prevailing amongst the ANC rank and file.

The outcome of the meeting was a mixture of cosmetic changes and

madness. Firstly, they closed down the Revolutionary Council and gave it a new name, the Political Military Council (PMC), really the same body under a different name. Then they co-opted more 'good boys' onto the NEC. A decision was taken against the background of the defiance of the troops that something was needed to take their minds off the bad leadership, and the best way to do this was to create a war with someone. That war would be against the UNITA movement in Angola. Apart from getting the troops off their backs, this action would be supported by socialist, non-aligned and OAU countries plus the Scandinavian countries, Holland and western anti-apartheid organisations. In turn it would make it easier for the ANC leaders to reward the troops with the promise of international acclaim. They would be seen as heroic men joining in the great adventure against Savimbi's UNITA rabble, arm-in-arm with their MPLA comrades. And last, but not least, the ANC leaders would collect the flow of increased financial aid from their international 'partners'.

In January 1983, Oliver Tambo made public that the Viana Papers had been studied at great length and went on to criticise them harshly and condemn them as unreadable. The fact that the ANC powers rejected all our proposals came as no surprise, but I was taken aback by the 'unreadable' criticism – after all, the papers had been typed. Anyway, the affair of the Viana Papers was closed, ignored by ANC leaders, though not forgotten by us.

Early in 1983 there was a mass exodus by camp after camp as our men were transported to Malange Province (the eastern front, UNITA's territory), in readiness for war alongside FAPLA, the MPLA armed forces. The plan for the troops was that they would fight a counter-insurgency war against UNITA, although those who commanded them knew full well that they were sending young men to a slaughterhouse, for none of our army was trained in counter-insurgency operations, whereas UNITA were experts, to a man.

We had no equipment to fight such a war, no reconnaissance planes, helicopters or bombers. There were no trucks designed for the conditions, no tanks for mobile heavy artillery, no mortars, NOTHING! It was easy to convince the troops that they were going off to victory. After the prison-like conditions in the camps they were happy to be on the move. They had been told that after six months they would be experienced combat troops, ready to be infiltrated into South Africa to bring the white regime to its knees. This rag-tag force of the Umkhonto we Sizwe took the UNITA elements by surprise for a few days but was brought to an abrupt and bloody halt when UNITA bush-war

experts consolidated, re-grouped and counter-attacked viciously, destroying many of our men and what little equipment they had. On 12 January 1984, after a year of hell, rebellious MK troops at Kangandala gave Chris Hani a dressing down and presented him with a package of demands to take back to Caculama for presentation to Tambo and the NEC, but the president saw no need to respond to the calls of the cadres to come hear their grievances, even though they were only an hour's drive away. That night he and his entourage left for Luanda. No sooner had the NEC left than the mutiny began to escalate. Total demoralisation ensued throughout the MK forces, destroying their will to fight.

Many kilometres away from the scene of action, Oliver Tambo made a speech which included the phrase *we must bleed a little for the Angolan people*. But it made no impression on the hearts of his followers. They simply ignored him and refused to go back into battle. This mutiny is known as 'Mkatashinga', a Kimbundu word referring to the burden borne by the MK soldiers.

The ANC leaders appealed to the FAPLA Army Commander for the Malange Province, a Captain Farouxka, to suppress this mutiny but he refused point-black, telling them that he would do no such thing, because in his view the MK troops were justified in demanding to be sent home to South Africa to fight the real enemy in the liberation war. Next they sought out the commander of yet another Cuban Division stationed in the province, who also flatly refused their request.

Frustrated and angry, the ANC bosses decided to take punitive action against the MK elements. A convoy of trucks under the command of the Mbokodo was organised to bring them in. The orders were to round up the mutineers in small controllable groups and transport everyone to Viana or Luanda, where they would be 're-educated'.

In the meantime, we heard, Mr Tambo had taken the lead in an ANC propaganda film called 'Crossing the Rio Kwanza'. The film director was to take the grandly named 'Rio Kwanza' (which in actual fact is a small insignificant stream in Caculama) and turn it into the 'Mighty River Kwanza' near Luanda (on the border of UNITA territory, where no one in their right mind would venture) by means of trick photography. Presumably Mr Tambo and his followers would cross this raging torrent in pursuit of the nearby UNITA forces, throwing them into a panic-stricken retreat. The film has never been shown anywhere, but it was reported that its unfortunate director – who had made his own statement by capturing the event with

mundane accuracy – on his return to Lusaka, suffered such anguish that he could not live with himself. He was found dead from nine ‘self-inflicted’ AK-47 bullets.

While the movie was being acted out, the MK mutineers had returned to Viana, where it was intended that they be secured in metal air-freight containers after being disarmed. Ominously, the camp was vacated, under orders of the ANC High Command, by everyone except a large contingent of security bully boys who were excitedly gearing themselves up for a feast of torture, beatings and killings. But once again things didn’t quite work out for the leaders and security staff. The mutineers refused the order to surrender their weapons, realising the consequences of such a folly. Their suspicion was justified, for what they did not know was that the Mbokodo had previously identified seventeen of them as agitators who were to be eliminated as soon as the opportunity presented itself. Instead, the Mbokodo men were confronted by trigger-happy armed MK troops, each of whom was up to the eyes with angry discontent. The slightest provocation at that moment would have resulted in revolt. The security commander managed to defuse the situation by accepting the mutineers’ demand that they retain their weapons and nervously the MK men settled down for the night, having established a guard duty roster amongst themselves for self-protection, should the security boys have other ideas.

Over the next day or two a fragile peace was maintained, though it was almost destroyed when one of the MK men, Solly, was arrested for a misdemeanour and locked inside one of the metal freight containers, in which he died of suffocation during the second night. The men confronted the Mbokodo commanding officer with this unnecessary tragedy, warning that they would not accept any repeat of this kind of treatment.

Shortly thereafter, Julius Mokoena, a member of the NEC, arrived to address the men in an attempt to calm their fears and anger. In turn they challenged him with their grievances, including Solly’s death. Mokoena glibly explained that Solly had shot himself in the head, an absolutely outrageous lie, as the men themselves well knew. He then proceeded to tell the group that everything he had heard would be used as evidence to be submitted to the Angolan government and that he would confirm that the armed mutineers in Viana were dangerous and should be apprehended. This would be enough to convince the Angolans to send their own armed forces to disarm the mutineers. He advised the men to elect a representative committee of ten to present their grievances to the ANC leaders in a civilised manner.

Eventually, however, he subsided into a menacing rhetoric, his parting shot being that the mutineers should remember the 1982 Pan Africanist Congress massacre, when dissidents were slaughtered by the Tanzanian Defence Force.

After Mokoena's departure, some soldiers visited surrounding camps to explain their cause and determine the political positions of the other cadres. (This was a dangerous mission, as the Mbokodo had been mobilised in Luanda and it was likely that they would be assisted by FAPLA.) As a result, despite the ambushes of the Mbokodo, troops started streaming to Viana to join and support the mutineers.

When the reports of these tragic events filtered through to us we were extremely perturbed. As I have mentioned, I was in charge of the building project which was in progress at The Plot. Most of the male cadres who had been stationed in Viana and who had moved out to make way for the MK mutineers, had been re-assigned to The Plot, while the female contingent had been re-camped in Luanda residences of the ANC. The Plot had now become a tent city of some considerable size and manpower – certainly enough manpower to corroborate, out of their own experience and observations, the stories of brutality, dissension and total breakdown of discipline.

We called an urgent meeting to discuss our concern over current events. It was noted in our roll-call that many colleagues had already deserted us to join up with the men at Viana. The decision was that we should go *en masse* to Viana and request a meeting with our men from the Eastern Front. We wanted to listen to their stories and grievances so that we could assess the truth of the situation for ourselves. We also decided that on completion of our investigation a delegation would be appointed to present our findings to the Regional ANC HQ in Luanda.

We succeeded in commandeering the required transport at The Plot and left for Viana. On arrival, we were surprised to find that many other cadres from various camps had converged on Viana of their own volition. Even at Caculama, the camp where Tambo had denounced the 'illegitimate' mutiny which had then been brewing at Kangandala, the staff unit commissar, Bandile Ketelo (MK name Jacky Molefe), together with officers and troops, had deserted the camp and boarded trucks and trains to show solidarity with the mutineers at Viana. A decision was taken to increase our strength by incorporating cadres from other camps and residences in Luanda.

These efforts resulted in a massive MK presence at the main meeting held at Viana the following afternoon. (Oliver Tambo later admitted, at the 1991 ANC National Conference in Durban, that

more than ninety per cent of the MK troops in Angola had mutinied. The meeting was commenced in the open, and after supper continued in the hall, with those who could not be accommodated crowding round the sides. I estimated that there were approximately a thousand people present. The mood of the cadres was explosive but not unruly – their tolerance had been stretched to the breaking point over the last five years, and if anything, the situation had deteriorated since the 1982 Viana meetings – they were sick and tired of rotting in camps in Angola and they wanted to go home.

I was one of the main speakers and I tried to impress on my comrades that to achieve this goal we had to elect a new leadership to prosecute the armed struggle. We could not simply go back to South Africa to fight, the operation had to be properly planned and executed. The concerns of the MK had not changed since the Viana Papers: the same accusations against certain of the leaders were repeated and the Mbokodo were lambasted. Three NEC men in particular were singled out for bitter criticism: Joe Modise, the MK commander, who most men felt was incompetent and who was seen to be abusing his position to facilitate corrupt money-making ventures instead of advancing the fight against apartheid; Mzwandile (Mzwai) Piliso, the chief of the Mbokodo, who was regarded as a soulless ideologue bent on the suppression of dissent and democracy in the ANC; and Andrew Masondo, who as National Commissar was responsible for the implementation of NEC decisions and for providing political guidance to ANC personnel, but who abused this authority to defend corruption. Apart from Tambo, these men were the only NEC members who had direct access to Quatro.

The demands of the assembled MK were clear: first, that there must be an immediate and total suspension of the implementation of the plans elaborated by the NEC in December 1982 and that only necessary tasks and structures should continue to function in the interim. In addition, cognisance should be taken of all the demands already made, but unanswered, in the Viana Papers of 1982, specifically:

- 1 There was to be an immediate suspension of the Security Department (Mbokodo) and the establishment of a commission to investigate its activities. There was also to be an investigation of the feared secret camp Quatro.
- 2 There was to be a review of existing cadre policy and an explanation of the stagnation and failure of the armed struggle against the apartheid regime.

- 3 A fully representative democratic conference was to be convened to review the struggle, prepare new strategies and elect a new NEC. (The demand for a conference in 1981 had been circumvented by the discovery of a spy ring, and when the demand was repeated in 1982, the ANC leaders had responded by presenting their own fully worked-out changes made without consulting the cadres. As Joe Modise later scoffed, did a group of soldiers really think that they could send the ANC leadership to a conference at gunpoint? This time, we were determined to be heard.)

The meeting continued until midnight, when it was agreed that a committee of ten people should be elected to present our grievances to the ANC leaders. The Committee of Ten comprised –

- 1 Ephraim Nkondo. In my years of exile I met very few people of the calibre of Ephraim Nkondo. He was a natural leader, a serious, studious, well educated man. I first met Ephraim while we were training in Russia in 1976: he was attending a course in propaganda at the Lenin Party School, and I enjoyed his company and the intense political debates that we had. I met him again in Benguela in 1977 and in Mozambique in 1978. Ephraim was one of the first inmates of Quatro after it was completed in 1979. He was released in 1982 and posted to head Radio Freedom in Luanda. The staff of Radio Freedom were accommodated in an apartment in the city, where I from time to time visited him and his eight highly motivated staff members. Ephraim and I used to discuss propaganda strategy – how long do you run a particular political theme, how do you get the enemy to react to your propaganda (which is preferable to you having to react to his), etc. The last time I saw him was at the one and only Committee of Ten meeting that I was able to attend. He was arrested in February and he died at Quatro in May 1984.
- 2 Omry Makgoale (also known as Sidwell Moroka, or Mhlongo), a former bodyguard of Oliver Tambo and member of the ANC security, who had demanded that a conference be held in 1980 in Lusaka, but was purged out of his security responsibilities in 1981. He was reinstated in 1983 and made District Chief of Staff for Luanda.
- 3 Simon Botha, who had trained to be an MK soldier in 1980 and was a very articulate speaker on political matters.
- 4 Sipho Mathebula, formerly a battalion commander on the Eastern Front, who was popular with his troops.
- 5 Moses Thema, a former student of Lenin's Moscow Party School. Now head of the political department at Caxito camp, he was a

fair-minded man who never condoned injustice.

- 6 Grace Mofokeng, who was with Radio Freedom, and leader of the female section of the ANC in Angola.
- 7 Kate Mhlongo, a propagandist with Radio Freedom, who gained popularity with the troops as an announcer.
- 8 Jabu Mofolo, who was at this time a political commissar of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble, an entertainment group who popularised the ANC throughout Africa and the rest of the world.
- 9 Bongani Matwa, formerly a camp commissar in Camalundi and head of the political department of Pango, who had been considered an instigator of the Eastern Front 'mutiny'. He was popular with the troops.
- 10 Mwezi Twala – also known by my travelling name, Khotso Morena.

After the general meeting was over, the Committee of Ten met to formulate a plan of action and Ephraim Nkondo was appointed chairman. In anticipation of a heavy-handed response from the ANC leadership, we committee members decided to secure the protection of publicity by plastering the walls of the Viana camp with placards reading 'No to bloodshed, We need only a conference'. (Journalists were invited to the camp but, as we discovered later, the Mbokodo intercepted them. Two men, Diliza Dumakude and Zanempi Sihlangu, both members of the Radio Freedom staff, would later be intercepted and murdered by the Mbokodo while on their way to the studios.)

There was much excitement throughout the camp, but we could not help having an uneasy feeling of doubt. There was something in the air! The meeting had been too easy and I had already experienced, more than once, the treachery of our leaders. However, I could not find it in myself to blunt the optimism of my less experienced comrades and consoled myself with the thought that this time the outcome might be true and sincere. In the early hours of the next morning I left for The Plot, where I awakened from a brief nap at 0500 hours, had a bath and went back to my tent to dress and get ready to continue my work on the building project. As I was on the point of leaving my tent, I heard a high-revving vehicle entering The Plot. A military Land Rover screeched to a dusty stop as I stepped out of my tent. A group of armed men jumped to the ground and the officer-in-charge shouted that the Angolan Presidential Regiment, fully armed, had invaded Viana Camp!

He proceeded to tell me a hair-raising story of events taking place

at Viana. A member of the ANC security force on guard duty had been shot dead, but fortunately our MK men had suspected that there might be trouble and for safety had slept outside the camp perimeter. The Angolan soldiers, thinking they had encircled our men, were shocked into submission, for within moments they found themselves surrounded by MK troops with cocked AK-47s pointed threateningly at them. A vicious but quick skirmish had ensued, resulting in the total destruction of one of the Angolan personnel carriers along with its crew by one of our RPG7 bazookas.

The Angolan soldiers had maintained an arrogant stance but had realised that they were at a disadvantage. Wisdom prevailed and the heat of the moment had cooled as a few of our men and some Angolan junior officers recognised each other from the past, having attended the same training academies in the USSR. While the Angolan colonel in command of the regiment had angrily continued to issue orders for his men to attack, they were being told exactly what the situation was, whereupon they had refused to carry out their commander's orders, telling him that this entire episode was an ANC internal matter and of no concern to them.

By this time the entire Plot's occupants had awakened and gathered around. They quickly understood what was happening and I instructed them to be ready to depart for Viana within the hour. While the men were preparing to leave, I went to report the whole situation to a neighbouring MPLA colonel, who was also a member of the Angolan Central Committee. He suggested that he should accompany us to Viana in order to give a greater degree of acceptance and safety with the commander of the Angolan President's regiment.

On arrival at the Viana camp we found the atmosphere tense but peaceful. Our MPLA colonel and I met the commanding colonel of the President's Regiment, Colonel dos Santos Franca, and he explained that he had simply obeyed direct orders from the office of the Angolan president, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, to neutralise and disarm the MK men in Viana, using force if necessary.

It appears that 'my' MPLA colonel was the senior of the two, on account of his being a member of the Central Committee, for to my relief he told his colleague to wait and not to take any further action until he had contacted the Presidential Palace in Luanda, to verify the orders from the President personally. Negotiations followed between the national chief of staff of FAPLA, Colonel Ndalo, and the Committee of Ten. The Angolans promised that there would be no victimisation, they would provide security for all; both the mutineers and the Mbokodo would be disarmed. I in turn briefed the MK men

at Viana of the agreement and instructed them to rest easy until further notice. 'My' colonel and I, together with two MK guards, drove back to his house where we deposited him safely. I then instructed the driver to return to Viana.

Well satisfied with the outcome of the day's adventure, the two guards, the driver and I settled back in our Land Rover seats, shared a packet of cigarettes and let the tensions of the day ease away. Our relaxed mood was shattered as a bullet smashed the windscreen to smithereens, passing between the driver and myself. The Land Rover skidded violently to a broadside stop as we leapt out of the vehicle to seek cover alongside it.

Another extended burst of firing hailed AK-47 bullets all around me as I managed to crawl from the vehicle to take better cover just off the road. I realised that I was bleeding from a dozen or so cuts to my face and hands caused by the particles of shattered glass from the windscreen. A few seconds later I was surrounded by about fifteen blood-crazed ANC security boys, each wielding their AK-47 as though it was a big stick. They trampled and kicked me, beating me about my body with the butts of their AK-47s, then savagely pulled me to my feet and half dragged me back to the vehicle, where they gleefully dumped me across the front of the Land Rover mouthing violent, blood-curdling threats.

I truly thought that this was my moment of departure from life itself, although by some miracle I was still very conscious of everything going on around me. I was aware of the presence of my driver and guards, who although armed had offered no resistance and had escaped the brutality of our attackers. From the conversation of the Mbokodo group around me I deduced that there were other men who had been ambushed a little earlier.

All the prisoners were then bundled into the back of the Land Rover and told to lie flat on the floor, piled one on top of the other. The bottom layer of men suffered agony when the vehicle took off, driven very fast over the potholes and bumps of the decayed road. When we reached a permanent Angolan Police roadblock just outside Luanda, the truck movement stopped for a few precious moments.

The Angolan police asked our captors who they had on board and the Mbokodo guards in our vehicle told them that they were carrying a load of *kwacha* (UNITA soldiers). With a wave of a hand we were through. A short distance after this roadblock we seemed to have joined a military convoy, and eventually we turned left into what we soon discovered was Graffanil, the biggest of the Angolan army garri-

sons. The vehicle stopped with a jolt and voices erupted into a cacophony of shouts and threats as we were torn off the back of the truck and dumped onto the ground. A boot in my back crushed me face down into the hot tarmac with my hands behind my back. The Mbokodo called this the *Beirut style*.

6. The Plot and Nova Installacao

After our departure from Viana Camp, Chris Hani and two members of the Liberation Committee of the Organisation for African Unity had arrived. Hani had denounced the mutiny and subjected the camp inmates to a dose of political rhetoric. He had called on all MK cadres committed to serve the ANC to move out of the hall, which was left empty, proving that while they were still committed to the ideals embodied in the ANC Freedom Charter, they were totally opposed to the wide deviations from it that the leaders were making.

Ten to fifteen minutes after our arrival at Graffanil Hani arrived with his entourage. He got out of his car and, stiff legged, circled around the group of us lying on the ground. His first words were 'Where is Khotso Morena?' The Mbokodo guard standing over us replied that I was present. 'Let him stand immediately,' ordered Hani.

I unstuck myself from the road surface, bathed as I was in sweat that was swilling off me like a running tap, mixed with blood from my wounds, altogether a pretty grim sight, I thought, and no way to attend a senior officers' parade. Hani stood erect before me with savage eyes, looking me up and down. Trembling with anger he said: 'What in hell's name are you interested in a conference for when you bloody well know you have a tried and trusted leadership.' He added that the ANC did not and would never tolerate any kind of conference that suggested the election of our own leaders. This kind of thinking was seditious and showed the mind of a traitor to the cause, and I should take cognisance of the fact that traitors were shot without trial.

One of Hani's entourage, one of his old cronies from his Lesotho days, 'Lehlohonolo' by name, glanced at me in a poor imitation of his boss and parrot-phrased Hani, barking 'Who do you think you are to demand a conference?' To Hani I responded that more than 80 per

cent of the MK was formulated by and controlled under the 1959 constitution, and was still protected by it. This clearly stated that conferences were to be held annually and furthermore, new elections had to be conducted every three years for the National Executive Committee. Chris Hani was glowering at me, but to my surprise did not interject, so taking a deep breath I kept going, reminding them that the last ANC consultative conference had been held fifteen years ago, in 1969. Since that time Oliver Tambo had continued to hold the reins of power, co-opting his friends into the NEC, which had been unconstitutional.

With that we were dismissed. Hani's parting shot to me was: 'Be careful you don't push our backs against the cliff!' We were placed under a form of house-arrest and spent the next few days incarcerated at Graffanil under the watchful eyes of the FAPLA army. The only memorable moment was being taken to the camp conference hall to be addressed by Hani, who in a conciliatory mood assured us that the problem was one of a political nature and that it should be resolved peacefully. We were pleasantly surprised by his about-face, for we had decided during the detention that we were in a serious situation, one that threatened death or imprisonment. Hani urged us to return to our various units as soon as possible.

I departed for The Plot after my release, once again having experienced a mental roller-coaster of doubt and confidence. I really could not understand what game the leaders were playing with us. There was no consistency anywhere or in anything they were doing and frankly I was bewildered. On my return to The Plot I took up work on my building project once again, as though nothing had happened. I soon picked up the news about the happenings during my absence; who had been disciplined or imprisoned and who had disappeared, but the most interesting story of all was that after Hani left Graffanil, he went directly to Viana, where he was greeted by angry MK soldiers who, having heard about the ambush, demanded to know what had happened to us. In spite of the fact that some of those comrades had been in the ambush and had escaped from it, Hani had blithely told them that no such event had ever taken place.

Chris Hani and his long convoy of security personnel became frequent visitors to The Plot. On each occasion he would call us all to an *indaba*, picking me out personally and reassuring me, in front of all my comrades, that all our problems stemmed from political misunderstandings which should be resolved amicably for the sake of achieving victory in the struggle for freedom.

I was joined at The Plot by Chris More, the MK instructor who had

been sent to assist ZAPU at Membesh camp in Zambia and who had run foul of Alfred Mangena, the ZAPU army commander. Chris had had a rough time. He had been sent to FC camp, some ten kilometres from Lusaka, where he was incarcerated in a 'black hole', a dugout with plastered side walls and a concrete floor, covered by a concrete slab roof in which a manhole was the only means of entrance or escape. Chris remained in this hole for five months and then was sent to a concentration camp on the Zambia/Malawi border. The concentration camp had been devastated by a Rhodesian attack in 1979 and Chris had been one of the few to escape. He made his way on foot back to Lusaka through the bush and along the way had met up with the ZAPU and Zambian reinforcements that had been sent to relieve the camp. He was taken to Lusaka and handed over to the ANC, who sent him to Camp 13 (while I was still there). As a form of 'rehabilitation' he was required to go through a retraining programme, which was ludicrous as he had been trained in the use of explosives in the Soviet Union and had a greater knowledge of them than his new instructors. We met again at Fazenda, where we worked very closely together on the youth committee, and both returned to Camp 13 when Fazenda closed. When, in January 1981, we were moved to Pango, he was made commissar of the outposts. In 1982 we parted ways when he was sent to a training camp in Malange Province to instruct recruits in the use of explosives. In 1983, when the ANC decided to assist the MPLA against UNITA Chris was sent to the front, where he became indispensable neutralising minefields and opening mined roads and bridges for convoys. During this period he was under too much stress for too long and when he rejoined me at The Plot, very disenchanted with the ANC, he was a nervous wreck.

On the fateful morning of 16 February 1984, at about 0830 hours, we were listening to the BBC overseas radio news, much at peace with the world, when out of nowhere the camp was filled with the roar of a fast-moving convoy of a dozen or so army vehicles, consisting of four-wheel-drive V8 Land Rovers and Soviet manufactured heavy vehicles. One of the Soviet 'Waz' four-wheel-drive vehicles peeled away from the convoy and came to the entrance of my tent where it halted. The ANC Regional Commander, Timothy Mokoena, jumped out of the vehicle, entered my tent and ordered me to follow him outside, ignoring Chris More and another colleague called Punch who were with me. Timothy pointed at the 'Waz' and ordered me into it.

The entire Plot area was teeming with heavily armed security men, led by Joe Modise and Chris Hani. Realising the futility of re-

monstrating, I meekly complied with their demands. Inside the 'Waz' sat two more security men, to whom I nodded as I prepared to take my seat. As I did so, one of them grabbed a hand grenade and, pulling the safety pin, let it fall to the floor. I instantly, in one lightning movement, dived out of the vehicle onto the ground and as I landed two of the security men shot at me from behind, hitting me under my ribcage, whereupon I collapsed bleeding from my wounds. Bullets had passed right through me and pierced my right lung and liver. I felt no pain at that moment: I was stunned and just lay there.

My tent colleague Punch and Joe Modise were the first to get to me, Punch trying to help me and Modise shouting and mocking me in Afrikaans and Sotho, something that sounded like *Dis lank wat ek jou sê, jy sal vrek soos 'n hond! Olla Shoa se ka ntja monna!* (For a long time I've been telling you, you'll die like a dog!) I groaned, 'I have nothing to say to you – since the meeting in Viana you have not been present, so you know nothing.' (Indeed, Modise had probably heard an exaggerated account of my speech at Viana, and also had no knowledge of Hani's promises.) The sun was beating down on my face; I could not focus my eyes, everything was blurred and I could only see Modise's silhouette. I indicated that I would only talk to Hani, who was then summoned. When he at last arrived, I reminded him that at The Plot he had assured me, in front of many witnesses, on three different occasions, that the whole problem was one of politics which could and would be peacefully resolved. I continued, warning him that it was obvious that his promises were false and amounted to deception which had to result in violent repression, which in the long term could only lead to defeat. Hani turned away without a word, leaving Joe Modise to sternly order four Mbokodo men to take me to hospital immediately, and to be careful that I did not die, or they would be held accountable.

Shortly after I arrived, bleeding but in one piece, at the military hospital I underwent an emergency operation. (I have never had the opportunity to find out exactly what the Angolan surgeons did to me, but when I woke up I found I had been cut and stitched from my sternum down and around to my back. I later found out that my lung wounds had been sutured with non-degradable thread, which causes me to haemorrhage when I exert myself, and to this day I have a continuous dull pain and cannot sleep on my right side. Alcohol, too, is taboo! I, am, however, grateful to the doctors who saved my life while operating under difficult conditions.) The following four days were spent in the intensive care ward where I recovered reasonably well, which was surprising especially in light of the fact that I was the only

survivor of the group of patients who were there when I arrived. This hospital was reputed to be the best in Angola, and there was a steady flow of badly wounded and traumatised patients, victims of the war against UNITA. Because of the serious lack of medicines and drugs, the mortality rate was very high, creating the atmosphere of a mortuary. I was happy to be transferred to a recovery ward, but this pleasure was short lived.

When the Mbokodo heard of my transfer, they immediately arrived to take me to a security prison in Luanda known as Nova Installacao. The doctors in charge of the ward tried in vain to intervene, saying that I was still under close observation and receiving vital post-op treatment, but the Mbokodo claimed I was a dangerous man and warned them to be very careful, since the orders for my removal had come from 'high places'.

I later learnt that on the day before I had been shot in the back by the Mbokodo, the Angolan government had collaborated with them to throttle the popular uprising. The Mbokodo had been allowed to enter Viana camp under the protection of the Angolan armed forces. Joe Modise and Andrew Maseko had arrived together with Oliver Tambo's appointed commission of inquiry from headquarters in Lusaka, which comprised James Stuart, Sizakhele Sigxashe, Tony Mongalo, Aziz Pahad and Mabuyiselo Dywili.

The following day, the balance of the Committee of Ten, together with twenty-two mutineers, were shoved at gunpoint by the Mbokodo into a FAPLA military vehicle for transportation to Nova Installacao. To break the tension, the captives in the closed truck broke into song: *Akekh uMandela, usentilongweni, Saze saswel' ikomand' ingenatyala* ('Mandela is not here, he is in prison, we have lost a commander'). We revered Mandela, but we were to be bitterly disappointed when he later turned his back on us. He stood head and shoulders above all other ANC leaders, and enjoyed immense influence. He could have helped us, had he wanted to, but he preferred to turn a blind eye to the injustices committed by the ANC.

Several days after their arrival at Nova Installacao, the mutineers were visited by the Stuart Commission. They were asked five questions:

1. What are the causes of unrest?
2. What role have you played in the mutiny?
3. Why do you want a national conference?
4. What can you say about the role of the enemy in this?
5. What do you think can be done to improve the state of affairs in the army?

While the mutineers were being interviewed, a man named Vuyisile Maseko arrived in prison with head injuries he had sustained while trying to resist arrest in Luanda. While being transported in a military vehicle containing Chris Hani, Joe Modise and Mbokodo, who were rounding up those who had managed to escape from Viana, he had tried to explode a grenade. Hani issued orders for the security personnel to shoot Maseko on the spot, but Modise intervened with: 'He must go and suffer first.' He did. He was not heard of again and many believe that he is still in Nova Installacao: he was not released in December 1988 when most of the others were.)

My transfer to Luanda was a journey of such unbearable pain that I can hardly remember any details, for which I am very grateful. I doubt that I would have survived if I had remained fully conscious. I did not know which prison I was being taken to, and when we arrived they placed me in a cell where I was held incommunicado for about three months.

The conditions were beyond imagination. Within the four walls the only item was the bed, which was a concrete slab jutting out of the wall about thirty centimetres off the floor. No mattress was provided, nor even a blanket. In one corner was the toilet, blocked to the seat with faeces and stale urine, surrounded by a cloud of bluebottle flies and a stench beyond description. To add insult to injury, there was no water!

I noticed that, although this was an Angolan prison run by Angolan security officers, it was as if they were subservient to the Mbokodo, who delivered me to my cell without any reference to the local authority, who addressed them as 'Chefe' (Chief). My captors had issued dire warnings to me, saying that under no circumstances was I to 'make trouble' for the Angolan authorities. I asked how and where I would get treatment and new dressings for my wound. The answer was terse and to the point, 'You get nothing, you are going to die here!' I was also told that the Angolans had been instructed not to give me medical assistance. Of all the tight spots I had been in, this appeared to be one that I would never get out of.

Simultaneously my general health and normal resistance failed and I contracted malaria, which I had had before, but this time, under the conditions I was living in, it proved to be more serious. The fever brought with it hallucinations, which was a blessing of a kind, as I lost all sense of time, so I did not eat and only sipped water when it was made available.

Time passed and one day I heard the sound of someone knocking on the other side of my cell wall, in what I imagined to be Morse code.

I managed to raise myself to a standing position on my concrete bed, high enough to peep through the concrete louvred frame dividing our cells. My heart was hammering with exhaustion and fear, for I was scared, thinking this was another security trick. To my delight and relief I saw it was a white woman, a prisoner, who in a whisper asked me if I was an ANC detainee. I told her that I was, and that I had been ill with malaria and was in a pretty grim condition. She responded that she had been trying to contact me for three days, as she had heard a rumour that the man in this cell was dying.

Very kindly she spoke soft words of encouragement to me, enough to rekindle a sense of hope. She informed me that there were other ANC detainees in the prison. Nervously I told her that talking to me was very dangerous, but she smiled and said that there was no reason to be afraid, as she knew what she was doing. Then she quickly said she would contact two female ANC detainees and try to get someone to help me. With that she was gone. I lay down on my concrete bed and wept with joy, simply because I knew I had a friend nearby.

A few hours later I heard voices outside my cell door, and a key engaging the lock. It opened to reveal an Angolan prison official who beckoned me to follow him. I was so overjoyed that I forgot the pain in my wound and found miraculous strength taking over to help me walk. There stood the remarkable, and to me, saintly Angolan lady who accompanied the official and me to the prison clinic, where the personnel gently treated me. They cleaned my wound, now septic and inflamed, dressed it and bandaged it neatly and comfortably. Treatment was given for my malaria and they gave me a supply of antibiotics and pain-killing tablets. The treatment complete, I was returned to my cell with a promise to the lady and me that they would make a daily visit to clean and dress my wound.

It was later confirmed by various sources that this lady had bribed the official and the clinic personnel to take care of me. As far as I was able to understand, she was an Angolan citizen who was in prison for some civil misdemeanour. As she was quite well off, she was able to purchase anything she wanted, to the advantage of the prison guards's pockets! She told me that one of the two female ANC detainees was named Grace, the other was lying in the prison hospital, injured as a result of the Mbokodo's interrogation beatings. At the time, owing to my weak condition, I didn't give the matter much thought. However, as my health improved, the penny dropped and I realised that there was only one Grace – Grace Mofokeng, one of the Committee of Ten in Viana. During one of my visits to the clinic I met Kate Mhlongo, recovering from her interrogation beating, and she

quickly briefed me on how she had got to this prison.

It appeared that all the members of the Committee of Ten had been arrested and detained, along with twenty-two others who were suspected of being agitators. Our men had been housed in the gallery of the Luanda Security Prison, built by the Cubans and reserved for UNITA prisoners. Their treatment was extremely harsh and brutal. Food was a rare commodity for the whole prison population, but our men had to survive on the left-overs of the other inmates. Starvation and lack of water were so acute that prisoners were collapsing and dying of hunger and thirst. UNITA prisoners who were fortunate enough to be allowed visits from their relatives had them bring water from home.

I learnt that after the James Stuart Commission had concluded its investigations, these were followed by the Mbokodo's own interrogations carried out under the supervision of two of the most notorious security officers, Itumeleng and Morris Seabelo. These two had started their interrogations in a reasonably civilised manner, but soon became impatient with this tedious process and reverted to their more usual methods of torture and beatings. Soon the prison echoed with screams from the interrogation rooms. The mutineers lodged complaints with the Cuban major who headed the prison administration, but to no avail. In mid-March a hunger strike was embarked upon, which was broken up in the second week when the Mbokodo arrived and carted Ephraim Nkondo, Sidwell Moroka and eleven others off to Quatro.

Conditions in the prison deteriorated and almost everyone was sick. Some suffered from anaemia and the bodies of others were swollen from the dampness of the cells and the lack of exercise and sunshine. The prison had little in the way of medicines or trained medical staff, and the Mbokodo ridiculed the prisoners' requests for help, saying that they 'chose to leave the camps, and what was there was only for committed ANC members'.

One day, after about three months of solitary confinement, I was taken to a communal cell where I joined Callaghan, Mike Mkwanzai and Mfundisi – all mutineers like me. The cell was about three metres long and one-and-a half wide, which meant that a passage about fifty centimetres wide between the concrete bed slabs was all we had to stretch our legs in, but it was wonderful to have human contact again.

I was destined to spend a lot of time in the company of Callaghan in the years to come. He was a Zulu from Zola in Soweto, in his late twenties at that time, and his real name was Vusi Shange. He spoke the typical *tsotsi-taal* of Zola and had a great sense of humour. He

would amuse us, for example, by describing together with appropriate actions what would happen to a stranger in Zola who asked for directions from a local. The local would pull out a large knife to point the way, and when he told you to turn left, he would slash you from the left, and when he told you to turn right, he would slash you from the right, and so on, until of course he finally robbed you. Callaghan had left the PAC after the Arusha Conference and joined the ANC in 1977; he had received specialised training from the Russians and had commanded an anti-aircraft platoon. I had previously met him in 1981 when we were transferred from Camp 13 to Pango.

Mike Mkwanazi (MK name) was a Sotho man in his late thirties. He was a fabulous storyteller who entertained us by relating stories he had read or movies he had seen in such detail that you could almost imagine you were there. Mfundisi was a Xhosa in his early twenties. He loved singing and had a fine voice. When we became depressed he would lead us in song. We sang mainly African folk songs and negro spirituals. The singing was very uplifting, but contributed to our thirst.

Our cell was located in a wing of the prison that housed mainly UNITA and other political prisoners. In the cell across the passage from us was a former central committee member of the MPLA. He was a cultured and distinguished man who spoke fluent English and had trained as a pilot in Russia. He had become disillusioned with the MPLA in 1977 and emigrated with his Portuguese wife to Portugal, but was arrested when he returned to visit his mother in Soyo. He had become involved with MOSA (Movimento Socialista Angolan), a rival political organisation, and had been sentenced to death. At times he became very despondent and I tried to cheer him up. He believed that African leaders had failed their people and held little hope for Africa's future. From time to time important MPLA dignitaries – ministers and vice-ministers – would come and visit him. Later I learnt that he was eventually released in 1991.

The Kamangistas (diamond smugglers) were the prison royalty. As in most places, in Nova Installacao money got you what you wanted. For example, ordinary prisoners received one meal a day; Kamangistas had three meals sent from their homes. Many of the Angolan prisoners were kind to us; they would arrange for relatives to bring us water from time to time in plastic garbage bags which the security guards would deliver. It had to be used sparingly for drinking and flushing the toilet, so we 'dry-cleaned' ourselves, rubbing off the sweat. Callaghan had formerly been a weightlifter and was a broad-shouldered man, but now he was reduced to skin and bone. I noticed

as I rubbed his back that his buttocks were empty and hung like bags from his body. His coccyx stuck out like a small tail. I laughed at the sight, but when he washed my back he told me that I looked just the same.

A very attractive and sympathetic lady used to buy the MK inmates cigarettes most days and our cell received two or three. Unfortunately we were all smokers. To extend our cigarette ration we would prevail upon prisoners who had exercise privileges to bring us fillers, such as a dried orange peel, which we would break up into little pieces to be mixed in with the tobacco and rolled in newspaper to form what we called 'alcoholakes'.

Being cooped up day in and day out in a dark damp cell took its toll and after ten months two of our comrades, Selby Msimeng and Ben Thibane, died of general health breakdown and, I suspect, of scurvy and anaemia, which were rife. The death of our two friends brought a change of heart to the Angolan authorities, who gave permission for the detainees to exercise in the yard, against the wishes of the Mbokodo.

Shortly after this concession, two ANC doctors – Dr Mfelang and Dr Hagar McBerry (real name Nzo) – arrived at the prison to inspect the conditions. I was destined to find out more about McBerry in 1985 after I was transferred to Quatro, as he was the ANC's medical officer in Angola. He had qualified in Moscow, but did not recognise or respect the Hippocratic oath, as he condoned the inhuman violations by the Mbokodo – and I know, because I was beaten before his very eyes. He would later claim that he was unaware of the deaths and abuses of those for whose health he was responsible. At any rate, his visit to Nova Installacao was a farce, for nothing changed.

In February 1985, after a year of detention in Luanda, we were visited by Chris Hani and a colleague, John Motshabi. Hani informed us that 'another' conference was planned and would take place in May. True to form, he then berated me, saying, 'And don't think it's being convened because of your pressure.' I just could not help thinking what a puffed-up fool he was as he continued to harass me with threats indicating that I, and others like me, were to face a court-martial – which meant that we stood a good chance of being executed. Because of my past experience I felt there was nothing more to lose, so on behalf of my comrades who were present, I told Hani that we welcomed the opportunity of facing a fair hearing so that we could present our case and grievances to the ANC. (I wanted to present an indictment against the ANC leaders and to hell with the consequences.) With that John Motshabi intervened, and in a reasonable and

diplomatic manner informed us that some of the leaders had been sympathetic to our demands and were not happy when we were disarmed and detained. It was the last thing I expected to hear. Amazingly Hani did not even twitch, though I sensed that he was livid.

Motshabi was one of the 'old' ANC brigade – in fact, he was to challenge Oliver Tambo for the presidency at the forthcoming Kabwe conference in May 1985. He was ignored, ostensibly because he was seen to be a tribalist and power seeker, but the real reason he failed was because the delegates to the conference were not elected on democratic principles. On the contrary, they were appointed by those who made the decisions in Lusaka.

We were left to languish in Nova Installacao for another couple of months, isolated from the outside world, although the Angolan prison authorities did treat us with a little more compassion than we had experienced before the death of our two comrades. The Mbokodo were less in evidence, but whether this was a result of executive order or boredom I never found out.

During early April 1985 some of the detainees were released, and on the 12th, those of us still in custody were informed of our imminent transfer to Quatro. The mention of our destination caused deep apprehension in our hearts, for we had heard that a group of thirty-two men had experienced a very tough time in this notorious camp back in February 1984. Two of the group had died after three months' detention: one of them, known as Zaba Maledza, was my friend Ephraim Nkondo, Chairman of the Committee of Ten; the other was only known as 'Vido'. The ANC went public on the fate of Nkondo, saying that he had committed suicide by hanging himself. (He was last seen being dragged through the prison with a rope around his neck.) This was to be taken with a pinch of salt, because he and the others were body-searched after every meal eaten in their isolation cell, which they were never allowed to leave. We too were destined to experience the reality of Quatro, which for want of a better word was a living nightmare.

7. Quatro

Quatro was situated in a clearing in very dense bush. The entrance to the camp was on the west side and from it ran two roads, one to Quibaxe and the other, deeply rutted, to the spring and reservoir where we got our water. A semicircular 1,2 metre deep trench had been dug on the northern perimeter of the clearing in which troops could be deployed if the feared attack (which never occurred) from UNITA took place. On the south-western corner of the camp troops in dugouts were positioned in the bush. During the period that I was a prisoner at Quatro I was required to build a small house with reinforced concrete roof and floor and thick brick walls which provided accommodation for visiting ANC officials. This house was reached by a path through the thick bush and was isolated from the camp so that if Quatro came under attack the officials would be safe.

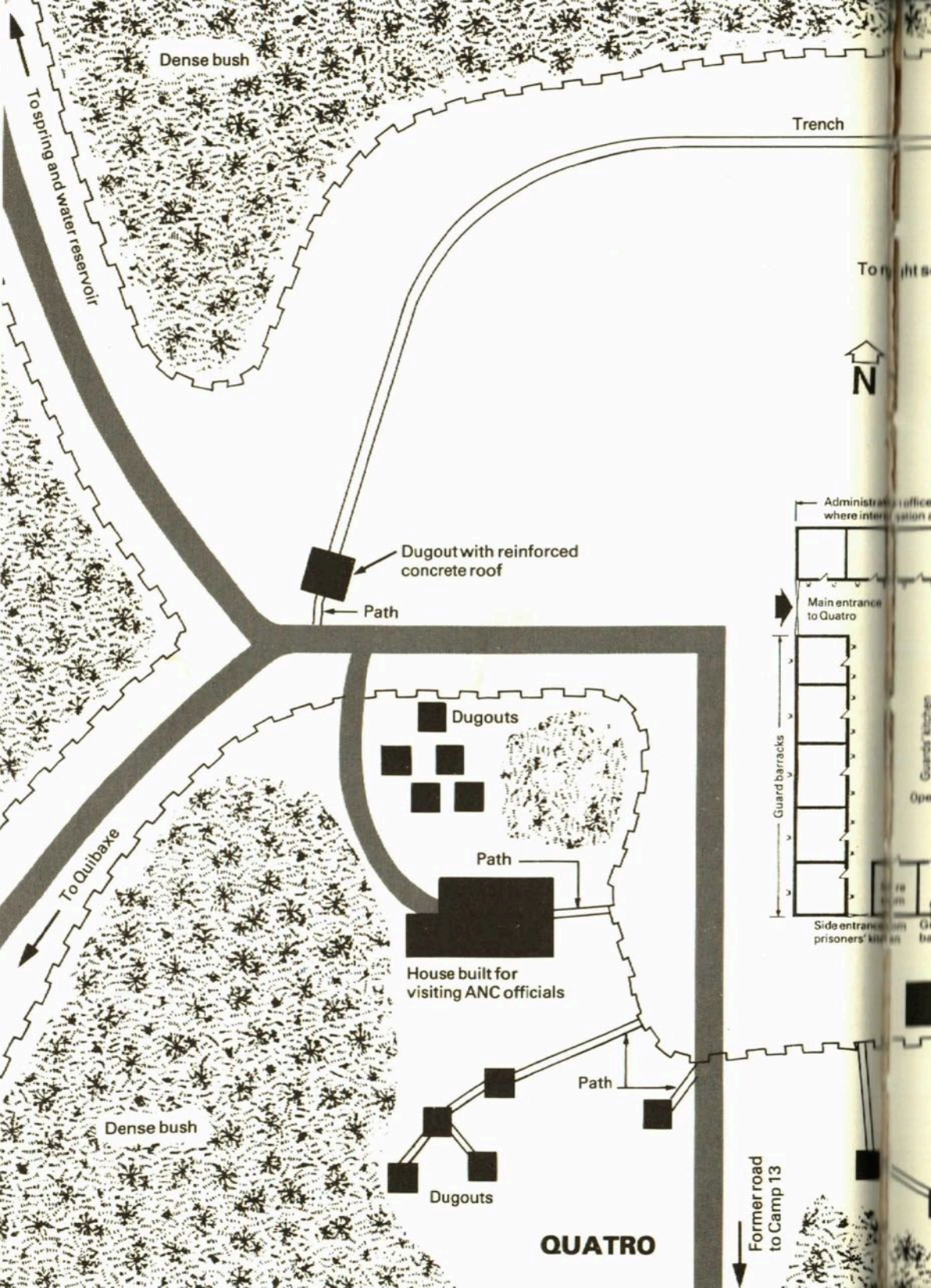
All the buildings at Quatro had concrete roofs and floors. Until 1987 none of the cells had windows, but after Oliver Tambo's visit, which will be described later in this chapter, small, high, barred openings were made in some of the cells (though not in the small isolation cells). The guards' dining hall was open on the sides and contained fixed concrete benches and tables which had been built by the Portuguese colonials. Prisoners were not permitted to go anywhere near the guards' barracks, where AK-47s were left lying about, not even to clean. The administration section was made up of offices and senior staff accommodation, and this was where the interrogations took place. The prisoners' kitchen – consisting of a couple of corrugated iron sheets that formed a roof over a wood fire – and a rudimentary pigsty (a source of meat for the guards) were at the south end of the camp. A path on the north side of the camp led to a small clearing where the prisoners' nightsoil was dumped in a pit, and a graveyard.

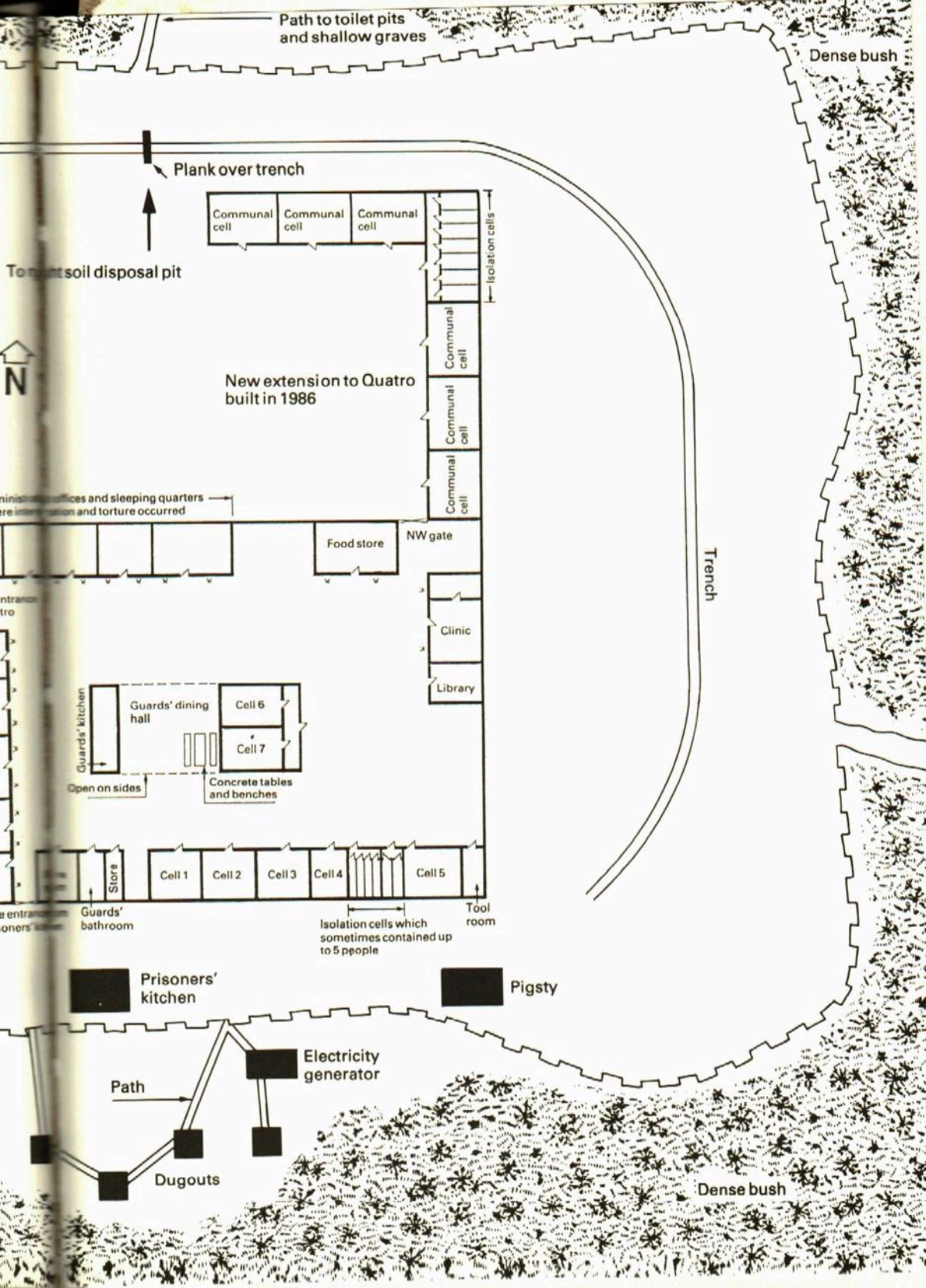
To the best of my knowledge no one ever successfully escaped from Quatro. Prior to my incarceration there I had heard of an attempt by a guard named David who colluded with a prisoner whose MK name was Gaika to escape together. Gaika was a coloured South African who had been a mathematics lecturer in Liberia but was induced to leave his post to teach mathematics to cadres in Angola. He was based at Pango, where he trained with the Moncado Detachment and ran maths classes. He was a disciple of Herbert Marcuse, the US/German reactionary Marxist, and this led him into conflict with camp authorities. After having enjoyed the academic freedom of a university, Gaika could not tolerate the repressive atmosphere of an ANC camp and he and some others made plans to escape. They started to accumulate provisions for the journey but these were discovered and he thus became one of the first inmates of Quatro – where, undeterred by his failure, he attempted an even more difficult escape.

The terrain and vegetation around Quatro made this an extremely difficult task. The bush required a machete to penetrate it; along the roads one risked being seen by a convoy or running into a roadblock, and on existing paths there were few places to hide. A further danger for anyone blundering through the bush was that it was difficult to maintain direction and there was the possibility of falling into one of the well-camouflaged pits filled with sharpened stakes in which locals used to trap wild pigs.

The escapees made for the Rio Donge, which separates Bhengu Province from Uige, approximately ten kilometres from Quatro. Along portions of the river bank the vegetation was relatively sparse and at other places there were sandbanks. The bridge across the river was guarded by the MPLA. David and Gaika made it to the Rio Donge and followed it until the river narrowed to a fast-flowing stream and it was no longer possible to walk along the banks. Gaika attempted to swim across but the current was too strong for him and he was swept away and presumed drowned. David was apprehended by the Angolans and returned to Quatro, where he was beaten black and blue and then placed in a cell where he was shot, in a fit of rage, by the camp commander, a man named Sizwe Mkhonto.

When we arrived at Quatro we were manhandled into the administration/reception area and, despite our weak and emaciated state, ordered to stand rigidly to attention. The officer in charge made his entrance when it suited him, which meant that we stood waiting for what seemed an interminable time, sweating it out in the Angolan heat. With the monotony of an old-fashioned Calvinist preacher, he read us the rules of the camp.





- 1 No complaints would be tolerated and severe punishment would be meted out to any such complainant.
- 2 Under no circumstances were we to utilise holes, cracks or other apertures for the purpose of observation or communication with the occupants of adjacent cells. To break this rule was regarded as a very serious crime.
- 3 During the entire period of detention at Quatro, the only human relationship allowed was with cell mates.
- 4 Detainees had at all times to run. Walking was forbidden.
- 5 Severe punishment would be meted out to any detainee who when outside of his cell, failed to hide his face, turn his back or take cover when in the vicinity of another detainee.
- 6 It was the duty of every detainee to maintain a minimum distance of five metres from any of the armed security guards. Failure to observe this rule was punishable by a beating.
- 7 Orders issued under any circumstances by the security guards had to be obeyed instantly. Failure to comply was punishable by a beating.
- 8 When you were punished by a beating you were not to block or attempt to evade the blows. If you did so, further punishment would be meted out.
- 9 Detainees had only one right, to obey at all times the rules and authority governing them.

Standing there with my fellow detainees, this litany sounded so mad that it was actually comical. God only knows what would have happened had I smiled.

We were made to strip and issued with filthy lice-infested prison uniforms. I could feel the lice on my back. An assortment of canvas shoes were dumped on the floor. They were second-hand, dirty and smelly. It was difficult to find a matching pair, and some prisoners had to make do with two left takkies or two right takkies, or different size takkies. It seemed to us that the Mbokodo were deliberately making us look like jesters, to destroy what little self respect we still had at this stage. In addition, since the takkies did not fit properly, we soon got blisters from wearing them. Foot rot also became a major problem for us.

The armed security boys then dragged us out of the admin offices and made us run to the cell block area, where we were allocated our cells. Of the nine of us transferred from Nova Installacao, two were placed in solitary confinement and the rest of us in cell number 4, which was long and narrow, barely wide enough for a tall man to lie across it, and empty except for a four-litre plastic container, neither

bottle nor bucket, which was to serve as a toilet. The only source of light and ventilation was the three three-inch pipes that protruded through the wall. (I remembered Commander Douglas and our terrible argument about 'American prisons'.) The door was solid steel but did not fit the frame very well, which allowed some extra light and air to filter in. (It also allowed the guards to eavesdrop on our conversations.) From about 0900 hours to 1500 hours the light was poor; thereafter the cell was dark.

Callaghan and I were still cell mates. The five others were Diliza Mtembu, Jackie Molefe, Edward, Simon Botha and Simla. Diliza Mtembu was cell commissar. He was a tall, well built Zulu from Dube in Soweto, the son of Giraffe Mtembu, who had been one of the first MK cadres sent to China for training, but who had turned state witness at the Rivonia trial. Diliza told me that he had left South Africa to join the MK in 1976 and that he had been approached by Mzwai Piliso in 1977 to return to South Africa to murder his father. (Diliza's father was shot and killed in his home in 1978.)

Jackie Molefe, whose Quatro name was Squealer, because he had broken down under interrogation, was a Xhosa in his early twenties. He was an intelligent, slender, effeminate type. Edward, a small Xhosa man in his early twenties, was appointed cell commander, which meant that he had to inform on any prisoner who violated the prison rules. His Quatro name was Moferiferi – someone who causes confusion. He was a mutineer. He was not popular because of an incident that took place quite soon after our arrival. Jackie Molefe and I were called to go to the library, but as we ran there we were set upon and beaten by the guards instead. When we returned to the cell our appearance frightened the other inmates, except for Edward who for some reason found the incident amusing. Simon Botha was a Xhosa from Port Elizabeth. We called him Popeye because he enjoyed acting. He was a jocular man who was good to have in the cell, because he relieved some of our misery and boredom. Simla was a Xhosa from East London, a fun-loving type with a very deep voice. (At Nova Installacao the Angolans had wondered at the *grande voce*, but unfortunately at Quatro we were not allowed to sing unless ordered to do so – often to drown the screams of a beating.)

We were very seldom allowed to leave the cell and the only work we did was the guards' laundry, until Christmas Day 1985, when the prisoners were called out of the cell and subjected to hard labour. I was still recuperating from my injury and I was left behind. When my cell mates returned they were barely recognisable. After their enforced idleness they had been unable to work at the pace demanded

by the guards and had all been severely beaten for their 'laziness'.

In April each year the prisoners were re-shuffled among cells for reasons that I never ascertained. In April 1986 I was moved to cell number 5, which was marginally larger than our previous cell and located in the south-eastern corner of Quatro next to the tool room. Apart from this there was nothing to recommend it; it had the same concrete roof and floor and was devoid of facilities other than the plastic container for toilet purposes. Callaghan and Diliza accompanied me; a new cell mate was David Makhubedu from Soweto. He was a mutineer like us, a mature prisoner who had been married before going into exile. He had studied Marxism-Leninism at the Party school in Bulgaria, a country about which he had mixed feelings. He had befriended some gypsies in Bulgaria and had been shocked by their poor living conditions; they were treated like non-persons by the government – for example, they were excluded from the compulsory education system of the country. At a student town in Sofia, students from socialist countries throughout the world led a pampered life as guests of the Party but common Bulgarians resented the privileges they enjoyed. David had been commander of Residence number 2 in Luanda; later he had been a commissar of the staff unit at Viana and then had been sent to the eastern front to fight against UNITA.

Another new inmate of our cell was Nicholas Dyasop. I had met him before in Viana. He was in his early thirties, a well-built man of Xhosa/Khoi extraction. He had a very pleasant personality and was very artistic. He was later to be struck down by cerebral malaria from which he almost died and it took him a long time to recuperate. Afterwards, he suffered epileptic fits which resulted from the harsh treatment he had received. Nicholas was also a mutineer and was a very responsible person, someone you could always rely upon to do the right thing.

Leroux was a Northern Sotho from Atteridgeville, a quiet, decent man who had tried to resign from the ANC and been branded an enemy agent and deserter. Mbomboshe had been in solitary confinement and was pleased to have our company. He had trained in Russia with Tokyo Sexwale, but had been involved in an altercation with another student there and had been expelled. He was sent via Tanzania to Mozambique where he was imprisoned for rape or attempted rape but never charged. One day he was driven to the border and handed over to the South African Police, who used him as a witness in the Pretoria Twelve trial. Joe Gqabi, who was one of those acquitted in the trial, persuaded him to return into exile. Upon his

return, Mzwai Piliso wanted to have him locked up but Gqabi and Moses Mabhida prevailed upon Piliso to give him the opportunity to be re-integrated into the MK. After their deaths, however, he was without a guardian angel and his participation in the Mkatashinga mutiny landed him in Quatro. Mbombashe was related to Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Chief Minister of Kwazulu. He had a stubborn, strong personality (which he needed to survive the savage beatings he received) and was a gifted artist.

The commander of the cell was Sticks, a Tswana in his early thirties who had formerly been a regional chief of security but had fallen foul of the organisation because of his outspokenness. He had spent four years in solitary confinement before joining us, during which time he had not been allowed to read. He told us of many killings that he had witnessed prior to his incarceration. To our surprise, he said that conditions at Quatro had improved since 1984. He was a friendly, quiet person, a hard worker and careful not to hurt other people's feelings – altogether the most unlikely security officer I had encountered while in exile.

Skurukuru (whose real name was Gabriel Setloke) was the cell commissar. He was a Tswana, in his late thirties, and came from Meadowlands. From time to time the camp commander, Pro, would remove him from the cell and return him bloodied and bruised, but Gabriel would not tell us the reason for this. Later I learnt that it was alleged that he had booby-trapped a car in Botswana in which the son of an ANC NEC member had been killed.

Otto was a white Afrikaner who had been one of the Broederstroom trio arrested and convicted for supporting the ANC. In Lusaka he was fingered as an enemy agent. He was friendly and mixed well, but he did not trust any of us; he knew there were stool pigeons in the cell. I never learnt his real name. He died in the cell from malaria. It was a simple case of neglect. Savimbi was a Shangaan, a pathetic case. He had been broken and was always afraid, always short of breath. He had been accused of killing an Angolan, but the Angolans said there was no case against him. Smoky was a Sotho accused of being an enemy agent who had been in Quatro since 1982. He did not work and we suspected him of being an informer. He frequently seemed to try to provoke confrontation between us and was regularly called by the administration, probably to report on us.

Ncede was a Zulu teenager who had joined the MK to receive education. He had been sent to Dakawa but ran foul of the security people there. Another teenager was Mahlatini ('he who is in the

forest'), who had been coerced into becoming a police informer and had left South Africa to join the MK. He was a well-built, strong character who gave us courage. Mbongolo, whose real name was Thabo Mohale, was a tall Sotho in his early twenties. He had been a COSAS leader in the Free State and had been groomed by Winnie Mandela while she was still confined to Brandfort. He had moved with her to the Reef and received training in trade unionism; he was also used to collect money from Beyers Naude. Winnie recruited him for the MK and arranged for him to be sent to Lusaka. There he was accused of being responsible for the SAP's arrest of an MK cadre named Captain. He was very intelligent and had studied politics in East Europe.

At the beginning of 1986 our routine changed: we were put to work. Quatro routine was monotonous. Reveille was at 0500 hours. In the blackness of the cell we awakened to our first chore of the day, to roll up our blankets. (We slept on the floor as there were no beds.) Next, two of us had to be ready to remove the toilet bucket, filled with its odious contents, at the orders of the guards.

At 0600 hours the cell door was opened with a crash and impatient guards gestured to us to grab the 'toilet' and start running with our load to the cesspool some hundred metres from the north-eastern gate. In itself a fairly easy journey, the only problem was that we had to run, negotiating our way through an avenue of guards armed with an assortment of sticks, whips, baseball bats and even sjamboks, with which they beat us as we ran. Despite the unrelenting blows raining down on us, we faced punishment if we stumbled and sloshed the 'cargo' as we ran down the steeply sloping hill. On arrival at the pit we emptied the contents into it, leaving the chamber at the pit side to be collected by us later in the day. We then turned and ran back to the cells. The return journey was fraught with danger because the guards thought it good entertainment to grab a detainee or two and give them a beating or a lashing. This abuse was handed out purely at the whim of the guards or in order to pay back a grudge. Bruised and bleeding, the inmates would stumble back into their cells.

The significant result of this chore-cum-beating was that the only toilet facility in each cell was now down at the pit. Those detainees destined to remain in their cells for the day would be without the luxury of a toilet until 1700 hours. Furthermore, we had no water or soap to wash our hands, so the men and the cell degenerated into a pretty disgusting condition. Because of the unhygienic conditions under which we lived, much of the time we had diarrhoea and it was absolute agony not having access to a toilet facility during the day. One

could not sit down or one was sunk! We 'tap danced' all day to avoid messing our pants or the cell. Aside from the embarrassment, discomfort, humiliation and of course the smell, if one had an 'accident', the guards would beat up the offender. At times I felt that I had been degraded to animal status and I had to keep reminding myself that the guilt must lie with the Mbokodo, not me. They had reduced me to this state, not I. But the whole purpose of the Mbokodo's treatment was to humiliate. One had no privacy, and when the four-litre containers which had dried faeces on the inside and outside were returned to the cells, we all rushed to join the queue to use them. The physical discomfort was so great that one was oblivious of any sense of shame or embarrassment.

At Quatro all actions were designed to subdue prisoners. We were, for example, not allowed to look directly at the Mbokodo, our eyes had to be downcast, to instil a sense of guilt or shame in us. I encouraged my cell mates to disobey this instruction, with reasonable success, and after a while we were made to face the wall when receiving instructions. We regarded this as a small but significant 'victory'. We had refused to be cowed! Once one ceased to resist, one was done for. Resistance, of course, resulted in punishment and one had to tread a fine line between attracting excessive punishment and retaining one's dignity, otherwise cowardice became the rule of life. It was easy to lapse into a state of depression, and I tried at all times to encourage my cell mates, which in turn helped me, to maintain some hope for the future.

At 0700 hours breakfast was placed at each cell door, mixed up in a twenty-litre tin. This 'mix' varied, sometimes a piece of bread and porridge, sometimes half-cooked beans and other things. Simultaneously we were allowed to visit the medical station, but the decision whether to eat or get medical treatment was left entirely to the inmate.

At 0730 hours work began. To the noise of heavy sticks and metal bars banging on the cell doors, walls and floors was added a cacophony of hysterical screaming and shouting from the guards, as we were summoned outside and given our duties for the day. For some reason, our cell seemed always to be assigned the heaviest labour or most difficult tasks. Perhaps it was because we were all ex-MK soldiers, whereas some of the other cells contained civilian spies. Work such as chopping and carting very large logs to build bomb shelters, chopping firewood, digging trenches, hauling a thousand-litre steel Russian water tank up a very steep incline nearly thirteen hundred metres long, was usually our lot.

From early 1987 until my release in November 1988, I was made responsible for building additional cells which formed another wing of the older structure, But being responsible for this work did not bring me any relief from the fact that I was a prisoner, in the hands of sadists. The ritual of beating and bullying did not let up, instead it became part of our daily living and working conditions. It was even joked about amongst the detainees, who used to say that the guards enjoyed beating-up on them because it relieved the boredom of doing normal keep-fit exercises.

This activity (or sport) reached revolting excesses and was amply demonstrated on the occasions when a team of six of us was assigned to spend a working day collecting firewood. The guards, fully armed, two for each detainee, would escort us through the near-jungle terrain selecting suitable dry trees. On sighting such a tree we would call the guards. Once approval was given we would move towards the target tree. Before any further action took place the guards would instruct one of us to chop sticks from surrounding bushes, with which they took turns to beat and whip us. They called this 'giving you fuel to chop the tree down very quickly'. We were called 'bandits', and 'bandits' did not get tired! 'Coffee or guava'? meant did you prefer to be beaten with a coffee or guava tree branch. If they decided that we were not cutting a tree down fast enough, they simply laid into us with increased fury. Even when they called us to receive our 'share of fuel' individually, we were told that the panga or axe we were wielding must not slow down, let alone stop. When the tree finally fell to the ground, we had to chop it into logs often the size of a butcher's block, and after this, one of our team had to start splitting the logs into firewood.

There was no break in the work, for as soon as we had felled and dissected a tree we would be moved to the next one and set about repeating the process. As midday approached we were ordered to make trestles to carry the firewood back to the camp. It was customary at this time to receive the morning's final beating. We were prodded and whipped like oxen as we struggled in the heat to pull the stacked trestles up the hill back to Quatro. Whichever way you approach Quatro, you have to negotiate hills, for it sits on the topmost plateau.

At 1230 hours it was lunch break! Under the circumstances we would have eaten anything just to fill our stomachs. The medicos tried to convince us that the food was nutritious, but we were very sceptical, as it was barely edible. The menu had two variations: onion soup or a small cup of rice mixed with tomato puree and water. Despite our inadequate, near-starvation rations the guards would occa-

sionally order us to bury a half-carass of rotting beef, spoiled because of the lack of refrigeration facilities. They did not know how to make biltong and although they knew some of the detainees could, we were never allowed to help them. The real reason for their reticence was our filthy condition, which resulted from the morning toilet parade and then being denied the use of water and soap to wash with.

At 1313 hours the whistle blew, the guards came down to us with their sticks and whips and we stumbled back to work, a repeat of the morning lasting through the afternoon. The working day ended at 1700 hours and we returned to camp. Although we were immediately locked up in our dingy cells, we accepted this happily as it meant relief from the beatings. Supper was then provided, a meal similar to breakfast, after which we were allowed to visit the medical station, cell by cell. After the bruising and cuts inflicted on us throughout the day, almost every detainee was in need of medical attention. However, only a fool would complain to the medicos; a wise man would admit that he had received 'corrective measure punishment'. In fact, the first aid orderlies themselves were not above applying 'corrective measures' to discourage us from bothering them. The cells became very dark as night fell, and in a few moments the only thing we were able to do was to unroll our blankets on our allotted area of floor and fall asleep. The floor was hard, but exhaustion overwhelmed the discomfort.

The same routine was applied on Saturday as throughout the working week, the only difference being that we returned to our cells at 1100 hours. Almost instantly thereafter the harassment started as the guards moved from cell to cell searching for forbidden items. Pandemonium broke out during these cell searches. The guards screamed, shouted and cursed at the cell occupants and we were forced to stand naked against the walls. Two or three of them would search our pitiful lice-infested piles of clothing and sleeping blankets while the others abused us, punching and kicking our legs mercilessly. At 1700 hours we were once more allowed to visit the medical station.

For most of the inmates Sunday was a 'free day' but if one was considered to be 'dangerous', as I and my cell mates often were, Sunday brought no relief from 'rehabilitation' or 're-education'. This meant work of any type under the control of guards, who, having lost their own day off, really vented their displeasure on us. (Quatro guards quite often became mentally disturbed as a consequence of the atrocities they had witnessed and that they themselves had perpetrated on prisoners.)

Once the door of our cell was locked for the night it became a haven

of peace and safety. It was only by adopting this state of mind that I was able to survive each and every day's grinding. I prayed silently to God, asking him to give me the courage to survive. This gave me a tremendous feeling of comfort and confidence. Although, with the arrival of each new day, doubt and fear would grow in me as the guards continued their orgy of sadistic beating, at the worst moments I was able to hang onto my faith even if only by a thread, for I knew that eventually the day would end, the cell door would slam shut, and I could lie down on my blanket and be recharged in my spirit.

Many fellow inmates knew of my deep faith but were too sceptical, and too lost in fear, to practise with me, and who could blame them? The death rate grew to horrific proportions, some by suicide but mostly by murder. Others went insane under the constant stress or from everlasting pain. From time to time prisoners were removed from our cells and we forced ourselves to believe that they were being transferred: we preferred to look on the bright side because we could not handle the psychological devastation of facing probable reality. Although at times we found it difficult to believe, we did know that conditions at Quatro had improved since the mutiny because it had received wide publicity at the Viana meeting. Before that very few of the people taken from Fazenda, Pango and Quibaxe camps ever returned, so far as I know: perhaps ten or fifteen per cent. No one knows how many people were slaughtered at Quatro and the other camps, not even the ANC leaders. The use of MK names and Quatro names added to the confusion of keeping track of who was dead or alive: I heard of one bizarre case where due to a confusion in code names a prisoner being tortured confessed to having murdered himself. Another confessed to murdering cadres who were subsequently found to be alive. Many of the guards (and prisoners) were young teenagers and were not particularly responsible people. The youngest prisoner at Quatro was a ten year old boy named Inzindlebe, which is a Zulu word for ears, because he had large ears. He was sent from Tanzania to Quatro because he was an 'enemy agent'.

I heard that the Quatro gravedigger was often forced to dig the grave of an Mbokodo victim by hand. Often while doing this he would unearth the remains of previous Mbokodo victims buried in shallow graves. ANC leaders, command authorities and international cohorts of the ANC would in the future vehemently deny that such things ever took place, but I for one was there, I saw it happening. I was personally involved and brutalised at Quatro for the better part of four long years.

The camp commander at Quatro when I arrived there was a man

by the name of Johnston. I had known him since 1979 – he was one of the Moncada Detachment. He enjoyed reminding me that at Viana, prior to the mutiny, I had said: ‘The vultures (security) are hovering above us looking for carrion.’ He would sneer as he asked me: ‘What do you have to say about the vultures now?’ He was a sadistic person but mellowed later, and after he had thrown the book at me he would sometimes give me a cigarette.

The second camp commander was a man named Pro and like good cheese he also matured with time. I had known Pro since 1978 when he was a new recruit in Matola in Mozambique. He had trained in the Soviet Union and had also spent a year at the Party school in Bulgaria. When Pro took command at Quatro I was his prime target. He had been the commander at Viana when Solly had been found dead in the container: feelings had run high and some cadres had felt that we should arrest him and try him for Solly’s death. Pro was aware of this and it did not endear me to him. He was a very harsh camp commander but to his credit he did later improve. He would advise us when there was no food; he did not just leave us without an explanation. The only source of news of the outside world we had was a small bulletin that was sent from cell to cell. This was very erratic and sometimes months would go by without us receiving any information at all. Pro occasionally visited our cell to brief us on what was happening. Unfortunately, at the time Pro started to reform, he was assigned other duties, and he spent months away from Quatro during which time we were at the mercy of the camp commissar Griffiths, who was a sadist of the worst order. The chief of staff, Dan Mashigo, was no better.

I decided that the sadism of the guards was inversely proportional to their age and that gender was an unimportant variable. The teenage guards were the worst: they had been so indoctrinated that, with a few exceptions, they had no compassion at all for prisoners. The more mature guards were generally more sympathetic: on occasion I had the impression that they were reluctantly being cruel in order to maintain appearances, but they were uncomfortable performing their duties.

The behaviour of some of the guards improved as they got older. This was true of a guard named Fortunate. He had spent a year in an East European Communist Party school and was a very cruel guard. He appeared to be a very intelligent person and later was appointed commander of a squad that would take prisoners on wood-chopping details. Over the years the guards would change and new guards would arrive and it seemed after a while that Fortunate had more in

common with us than he had with the new teenage guards. Out in the bush he would frequently send the younger guards away, he no longer beat us, he discussed things with us and he trusted us. He really had changed. Unfortunately there were few Fortunatees.

A young female Sotho-speaking guard named Rose was another welcome exception to the rule. She would often enter cell 3, where camouflage uniforms for the MK were being sewn, and sit on the prisoners' blankets and sew herself. Most guards would only pick up a prisoner's blanket with a stick. Unfortunately Rose only stayed at Quatro for approximately six months.

There was no sexual discrimination among guards; when we were stripped naked and searched, which happened regularly, this would also be carried out by teenage female guards. In relation to all the other humiliations heaped upon us, this fact was not particularly burdensome.

A particularly vicious female guard was a young girl, perhaps sixteen years old, named Vanessa. On one particular occasion we were building extensions to Quatro and we were in the process of casting the reinforced concrete roof slab over the prison cells. To get the concrete to the roof slab we had built a ramp out of timber and prisoners were pushing wheelbarrows of concrete up onto the roof. David Makhubedu, my cell mate, was pushing a wheelbarrow up the ramp when Vanessa called him. He was unaware of how he had annoyed her, but she ordered him to squat before her with his legs apart, and she then tried to kick him in the crotch. As a reflex action he closed his legs and she kicked him on his knees with her heavy Czechoslovakian-made boots. She became very angry and the process was repeated several times with Vanessa becoming angrier with each evasion. Vanessa was not a very big girl and even in his weakened Quatro state David would have been able to thrash her with ease but he had to steel himself not to retaliate because this would invite the ire of the other guards, who always showed solidarity with one another. Evading blows was against Quatro rules: a couple of guards did come to Vanessa's assistance and they gave David a good hiding.

Invariably the young female guards formed attachments with the male guards: several became pregnant and they would then be sent to Dakawa in Tanzania. Quatro was no maternity home! It was seldom that a male prisoner got to see a female prisoner. Occasionally we might meet one at the medical station, and occasionally we would hear their voices, or hear them scream when they were beaten or raped in their cells in front of their cell mates. One named Jabu was a

Xhosa from Port Elizabeth who had been based in Zimbabwe. She would scream her lungs out whenever the guards tried to rape her. She knew her rights (which did not apply at Quatro) and she would volubly quote the Code of Conduct and the Freedom Charter, etc.

In April 1987 I was moved to cell number 6. Ephraim Nkondo and I had worked on the subdivision of this cell and cell number 7 from the original plantation store room. We were jam packed and had to stagger our bodies to sleep, even-numbered inmates sleeping with their heads against one wall and odd numbers sleeping with their heads against the other. A short man had to lie opposite the latrine bucket, and if anyone needed to use it at night he would have to stumble over his companions, trying to disturb their sleep as little as possible. Everyone was remarkably good-natured about this inconvenience.

One benefit that we gained by moving from cell 5 to cell 6 was that the camp's diesel truck used to be parked adjacent to cell 5 and when it was started in the mornings we had been subjected to a blast of diesel fumes. This had been a major problem for Diliza Mtembu, who suffered from asthma. The poor ventilation in the cell caused him to have frequent serious asthma attacks which laid him low and made it impossible for him to work. Some of the more sympathetic guards would allow him to sit outside on some evenings.

Diliza, Callaghan and I were the Three Musketeers – we had been through Nova Installacao (although not in the same cell) and cells 4, 5, and 6 together. Diliza was appointed cell commander of cell 6 and I was appointed cell commissar. I think that my appointment by the camp administration was out of pragmatism: they recognised that I was the *de facto* commissar in the cell. Some camp administrators and cell commissars believed that the function of a commissar was to rat on his or her fellow inmates, but of course this is not so. I had learnt in Russia that the commissar's function was to be the political pillar of his unit: he was the dynamo that motivated it, kept it in battle readiness – and provided it with political instruction. I was a conscientious cell commissar: I tried to keep morale high, encourage and uplift my cell mates. I was greatly assisted in this by Callaghan, who was a tower of strength. Perhaps we performed this task more diligently than the camp authorities would have wished, because we were quite successful in countering the fear that Quatro instilled in inmates. I tried to give a balanced view of the benefits and disadvantages of communism, socialism and free enterprise (the fact that from time to time some of my weaker cell mates would be pulled out of the cell and questioned about my political instruction was an added inducement).

I was required to make monthly reports to the camp administration about each cell inmate. I was regularly taken to task by the staff commissar who did not like my method of description under the heading of 'character' of inmates as 'bad', 'fair' or 'good' (I generally awarded everyone a 'fair'). He wanted individual descriptions of everyone but I argued that the method I was using was identical to the method I had used as a commissar prior to my incarceration. This became a monthly wrangle and I would frequently be punished for my intransigence, but I was now more concerned about the preservation of my soul than of my body.

The dehumanisation of the detainees damaged, as it was intended to, the very core of the men. I watched healthy young men disintegrate into cabbages with no will to live. They became little more than robots, morons. No longer did they care about the lack of soap and water to wash their hands, soiled day after day with excrement. The increasing stench went unnoticed for it became a condition of life. We could not smell it any more. Personal hygiene was no longer recognised and all of us broke out in boils, cracked lips festered, insect bites turned into ulcers and foot-rot was rampant. When the pains were most acute some of the men would rather crawl than walk even when this invited cruel lashings from the guards across exposed backs, creating even more open wounds.

The prison clothes were made of a rough hessian type of material which I believe was sent from Russia. Normally this cloth was produced as a covering for machines and goods being transported. As a prison uniform it felt like wire wool and chafed the skin mercilessly until open sores were caused. Worn in the conditions we lived under, the cloth collected filth and sweat beyond belief. From the moment we arrived at Quatro this prison suit was the only garment we were given to wear. Every three to four months we were allowed to wash it. (Except for our daily water rations of one cup, and the odd rain storms, the washing water was all the water we ever saw. After we had all received our ration of water, if there was any remaining, it would be shared out by teaspoon!) The laundry exercise was quite unique. A two hundred litre drum cut in two halves, each filled with dirty greasy water, served as our washing machine. We would carry the drum into our cell where we would strip naked and throw our rags into the water. We used our rags as washing cloths and rubbed our bodies down with them. After a few minutes we would retrieve our garments and get dressed immediately, soaking wet. All of us acted like school kids at play for the precious ten minutes or so of washing time permitted by the guards. Our laundry now complete, we had to

carry the containers of water (which now looked pretty dirty) to the next cell, whose occupants then repeated the process. Needless to say when the same containers finally reached cell 7 the water had the consistency of thick grey porridge.

Another humiliation inflicted on us was the issuing of a Quatro name to every inmate. The rationale for this action was to hide the true identity of the individuals from each other, should one of them be killed in your proximity. In this way, should one survive Quatro, the identity of the victims could not be revealed. For example, my real name is Mwezi Twala, my MK (or 'travelling') name was Khotso Morena and the Quatro name assigned to me was 'Nyoka', which means 'snake' as in 'snake in the grass'. The Quatro names were designed to mock. Names such as '*Lerete*' (a Sotho word meaning testicles), tits, fool, monkey and so on, were assigned to inmates. The guards generally referred to us as *Mdlwembe* – counter-revolutionary bandits. Others used swear words when calling us, yet others declared that their dogs were better than us. A seemingly harmless 'game', an observer might think, but coming on top of all the other humiliating activities it was the final straw to many of the detainees. Sizwe Umkhonto (also known as Gabriel Mthembi), who at the age of nineteen became the first Quatro camp commander, in 1979, later justified the Mbokodo's use of Quatro names as being merely 'in the tradition of a dry sense of humour'.

Real torture, as practised at Quatro by security specialists, was such that the bestial Khmer Rouge of Cambodia could have learnt a thing or two. They could, and did, keep detainees incommunicado for anything up to four years with no access to any kind of reading matter and for no apparent reason, and under no circumstance would a detainee be allowed the comfort of a Bible. One of the most horrendous events involving torture occurred during my sojourn at Quatro, involving one of our cadre who had managed to escape from Viana to a refugee camp in Luanda. This poor wretch had decided to quit the ANC by resigning. He had gone to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to seek protection, which was accorded to him. In the course of his short stay under protection, he had befriended another ANC comrade who had also sought the same protection. Under the eyes of the UNHCR authorities they were both kidnapped by ANC security and brought to Quatro, where they were sealed in separate isolation cells. (No one knows how the abduction was managed, but it was widely rumoured that the scarce commodities such as sugar, tobacco, cooking oil and canned fish that the ANC received from its overseas supporters were sufficient to spring

an ANC escapee from the UNHCR: when the foreign official was absent anything could happen.) The one who had left Viana Camp underwent mind-twisting torture and questioning for days. At this time I did not know of his existence, but shortly after that he was thrown bodily into our cell. His Quatro name was Pudi.

My first sight of him almost caused me to faint with horror, as it did my cell mates. His head was rotting and the smell was beyond description. One could even smell his head above the normal stench that prevailed in the cells. He had a white burn scar running from what had once been his hairline down to his nose. His eyes were swollen and closed and the only sound squeezing out of his deformed and battered lips was an agonised moaning whimper. His poor body shook as though he had epilepsy. We did our best to comfort him and over a tortuous half an hour he painfully told us that his captors had brought him to Quatro, questioned him, beat him and poured boiling water on his head continuously until he had lost consciousness. When he awakened a few days later, the injury to his scalp had not been treated. Consequently, as we could see, the infection had putrefied into a rotting mess.

I threw caution to the wind and decided to ask one of the medical orderlies if he could tell us how to clean the terrible wound and relieve the pain. Luckily the orderly was compassionate and gave me a razor blade, some antibiotic pills and ointment. With these items we were able to scrape some of his remaining hair and burnt skin off his scalp. The pain was obviously excruciating, but amazingly he controlled his agony to moans and groans. The ointment once applied did give a little relief and the antibiotics took control of the infection. Had the guards found the razor blade and the antibiotics, we would have been severely punished, so we wrapped them in plastic and submerged them in the plastic latrine.

How he ever survived the torture of the days before he was thrown into our cell, and then the treatment that we gave him, God alone knows. Slowly but surely he started to recover, feeling a little better every day, though we still could not see how he could possibly survive.

During the ensuing days he got steadily stronger, and as the swelling around his eyes and lips went down he was able to talk to us. He told us that the friend who had been kidnapped with him could not walk because the security men had burnt the soles of his feet with red hot coals, and then forced him to stand for lengthy periods. We never found out where the friend was being held in Quatro, so we presumed that he must have 'disappeared', as had so many others.

Soon, the guards became aware that our severely burnt comrade was healing, whereupon they stormed into our cell and dragged him out, took him to one of the nearby trees, made him hold the trunk and thrust him head first into the tree time after time, until his burn wounds again burst open into a terrible mess. He fell unconscious to the ground and in this state was savagely beaten about the head and face with sticks. When the guards were too exhausted to carry on, they dragged his body away, alive or dead I could not say, but he disappeared for good, almost certainly to a shallow grave. This event plays on my mind and each time I remember it, I feel sick and angry. It's something that I shall never be rid of till the day I die.

The pressure of constant torture was maintained religiously at Quatro. The daily beatings were accompanied by perpetual thirst, for we were rationed to between a half to one small cup of water per day, in an area not too far from the equator. I constantly dreamed of clean water pouring from a tap, as did my cell mates. Today, years after having left Quatro, I am still thankful each time I enjoy a glass of water. Many suffered dehydration and died, for at Quatro no one received more than the water ration stipulated. Even when the 'laundry-day' water arrived we would bend over the tub and, like pigs around a trough, drink our fill of the soapy contents hopefully before the security guards realised what we were up to.

Another form of torture occurred when the guards made an impromptu visit to the cell. There was no warning, the door would be smashed open and in they would rush, lashing out with their sticks, ordering us to line up for a beating. The thrashing they handed out to each of us in turn was no schoolmaster's 'six of the best'. The thrashing was meted out by bullies with a personal grudge against the victim, so the length of beating depended on the amount of personal revenge wanted. When they had exhausted their anger, they always departed leaving us very bloodied.

Paradoxically, the worst part of the treatment was hearing the screams of pain and suffering emitted by others. I never realised that I screamed with pain as the blows were raining down on me. The real torture was waiting my turn to be beaten.

Indefinite detention mixed with merciless brutality is an insidious form of torture which can, and did, cause neurosis and complete mental breakdowns. The worst days were those when no one came near us. Every little noise would make us jump out of our skins and break out in cold sweats, our mouths drying up with pure fear and nightmarish anticipation.

On three occasions during my detention at Quatro I had teeth ex-

tracted by the camp dentist. We named him 'tooth extractor' because that was all he could do. In fact he was an Angolan peasant who owned a couple of rather large pliers and a pair of tongs, his extraction equipment, and who had once worked as a cleaner in a dentist's rooms. The tooth extractor also had one needle and syringe to anaesthetise the gum (which we were grateful for), which to my certain knowledge was never properly sterilised. He was paid with beans, rice and sugar by the ANC security for his services. The lack of sterilisation did worry us, there was the possibility of picking up the HIV virus from his one and only needle, but no one contracted the disease that I know of; since none of us had touched a woman or appeared to be homosexual, we tried not to think too much about it. I had to admit the possibility of contracting AIDS lurked in my mind, and the first opportunity of having an AIDS tests would not come until after my return to South Africa.

Other manifestations of cruelty existed at the Quatro Medical Station. We were, almost to a man, consistently stricken with malaria fever, but reporting this problem was rewarded with more lashings with coffee tree branches, a very hard wood which always left its mark on one's back or buttocks. The same branches were also used to beat up the patients occupying the medical station beds, in an endeavour to stop them asking for treatment. It was a very successful system judged by the fact that patients were rare, but the death rate climbed to unacceptable levels when measured against normal civilised standards. Most of us simply accepted that we'd live or die by our own strength or lack of it. A particularly sadistic torture employed at Quatro was to take a bag, place a live rat inside it and then tie the bag over the victim's head. I had always had a thing about rats and I lived in fear that the Mbokodo would discover my weakness and use it to crack me. The Swedes used to send us fish in large paraffin-type cans. The camps had limited refrigeration facilities and from time to time the fish would go bad and the tins would explode splattering rotten fish in all directions. There were many rats in the thick undergrowth around Quatro which then came to eat the rotten fish. After a while the hair on these rats fell out and the bald rats would snag their stomachs on thorn bushes which resulted in their entrails hanging out. These pathetic creatures were particularly abhorrent to me. Prior to my incarceration at Quatro, I had been walking along a path in the vicinity of one of the ANC camps, when a bald rat blocked my way. I took my AK-47 and emptied a full magazine into that rat! I blasted him into eternity! After I had vented my spleen on the poor rat, I felt quite ridiculous. Here I was a big bad MK man afraid of a bald rat! I

almost started a mini war – the camp thought that we were being attacked and went on to red alert!

Nor did I like snakes, but I preferred them to rats. Once, in an underground dugout, I lived for quite some time in perfect harmony with a snake. The snake would eat the rats, and at night when I returned to my dugout I would stamp my feet to warn it of my return and give it time to retire into its hole.

One game the Quatro guards loved to play with us was called 'the tractor chase'. They had an old tractor which was in running condition. Its only defect was a broken steering which could not be repaired or replaced, spare parts being completely unobtainable. The security guards managed to secure a long metal pole to the tractor's front axle assembly. We were then ordered to take hold of the heavy metal pole and run in front of the tractor, stumbling through the tough undergrowth and thorny bushes, guiding it by pulling it either left, right or centre, as instructed by the guards. Failure to react to instructions quickly incurred the wrath of the guards and heavy lashings to our backs, heads and legs were applied. The entertainment now began as the driver of the tractor would rev the engine, change gear and accelerate into us. Hanging onto the heavy metal pole we would have to run faster and faster to stay ahead of the vehicle. To stumble and fall meant serious injury or death as the wheels of the heavy vehicle crushed one's body into the sun-baked, boulder-ridden ground.

For an encore the guards would order us to turn the front wheels in the direction of a steep hill, and as we stumbled and strained the driver would once again accelerate, pushing us until we lost control of the metal pole and out of fear of being crushed, jumped away from the wheels, landing flat on the ground but at least safely away from danger. We then received a severe beating for not obeying orders. Of all the crimes committed against my comrades and myself, this was the one that affected me the most. It's the only time when I truly was a hair's-breadth from murderous anger against the guards.

In the hot and humid cell, the work day finished and my body aching from the bruising punishment of the guards, I did a lot of thinking. My mood was often dark. I despaired that this life of torture would ever end, but surely it couldn't go on forever, surely the day would arrive and I would be free to pursue my dream, the dream that somehow, somewhere, I had lost. I had never been tried or sentenced by the ANC, but for all I knew my sentence could be to eternity.

I meditated on the journey I had taken in order to be a soldier, to do my bit to free my people from the yoke of apartheid. All I had achieved was to be subjected to another kind of repression, impris-

onment and torture. If I had stayed in the Republic, fighting my own war against the regime, I would have achieved far more in a week than I had over the past fifteen years in Angola. Mozambique and Zambia under the communist ANC leadership. Also, in the event of being apprehended by the South African authorities, I would have faced a proper judicial trial and been sentenced to a prison term.

Prison would have consisted of a clean bed and blanket, and decent clothes would have been issued. Reasonable hot meals would have been provided. Clean hygienic cells with running water on tap, a civilised toilet facility and shower cubicles. Added to this would have been an acceptable prison work ethic and a small but welcome income, enough to allow me the luxury of buying cigarettes and toothpaste. I might have had the opportunity to study, as Nelson Mandela did, almost any subject, with access to the prison library. I would also have received medical care for injuries and illness, plus spiritual comfort from a prison chaplain of a denomination of my choice. In no way would I have been misused, beaten and tortured at the whim of a spiteful revenge-driven warden.

Had the South African government treated me half as badly as the ANC, it would have been deserved to some degree, as I had broken South African laws. In the case of the ANC, there was no such rationale. It was virtually impossible to find a detainee who had committed a clearly defined crime against the system, because there was no system. I concluded that the policies of the ANC leadership were based on personal ambition and fear. This would account for the widespread and visible schizophrenia throughout the entire command structure.

One day, as I meditated in this vein, the cell door opened gently to reveal three or four figures whom I could not recognise against the bright light. Nervously we all stood up as one of the strangers stepped into the cell, sweeping our 'home' with his eyes and clucking at what he could see. To my absolute astonishment I recognised Oliver Tambo. My heart somersaulted in my chest as he stared at each of us in turn, at our blankets laid out on the floor, and then gestured that we should sit down. An electric silence ensued, broken only by Tambo as he cleared his throat. Leaning against the wall he lifted both arms and in a quiet voice he expressed his shock at the conditions of our detention. Bitterly I thought to myself that he must be one of the greatest actors in the world. I could not believe that he did not know about the conditions at Quatro.

He proceeded to tell us that the NEC had agreed that our 1984 grievances should be recognised as genuine, but it criticised our refusal to

disarm. He then gave us an opportunity to explain our actions. My cell mates indicated that I should be spokesman. Nervously I tried to marshall my thoughts and as my tongue started to work, my confidence grew. I told him about the brutality of the ANC security men after the Viana meeting, perpetrated at the instigation of the ANC leaders and the Angolans, specifically General Ndalo, who was at the time Army Chief of Staff (FAPLA); that we had allowed ourselves to be disarmed after the General had assured us that all ANC and Mbokodo would also lay down their arms and promised us his protection; that no sooner had we turned over our arms than the Mbokodo turned its guns upon us, and that after these actions we had re-armed in order to protect ourselves from further treachery.

Looking straight into his eyes, I told him that our presence in Quatro proved our decision to have been right. He replied with a monotonous litany about the need of all members of the ANC, MK and security, to work in harmony, to bury the hatchet once and for all, to close ranks and march forward to victory, then wished us well, turned on his heels and disappeared through the door, giving us no chance to discuss how best this harmony could be achieved.

In spite of Tambo's visit, the charming words, the implied promises, we were almost immediately subjected to very harsh and brutal treatment which intensified as the days, weeks and months passed.

8. Dakawa

On the morning of one unforgettable day – 16 November 1988 – we were given notice of our release from Quatro. There were conditions, however, failing which our detention would continue.

The terms of the release documents were that we must never divulge the existence of Quatro or what had taken place there. The penalty for breaking these conditions of release was instant execution. All of us signed the document without hesitation. For myself, I signed because there was nothing to lose. After all, whatever waited for me outside of Quatro could never be worse than where I had been. I was later to learn that as a consequence of the New York Accord signed in December 1988, the ANC had to quit Angola together with the Cubans and in return the South Africans had to withdraw from Namibia by July 1991.

It was one of the greatest moments of my life when, sitting in the back of a truck, I watched Quatro recede and disappear, I hoped for ever. We were taken to a former beer warehouse on the outskirts of Luanda. Female prisoners slept downstairs with the guards, males upstairs, on pieces of foam rubber on the floor. There were no toilets or showers, but after Quatro this was luxury: we had plenty of space, there was electricity and all prisoners were able to mix quite freely. We were not permitted to leave the warehouse, but we could look out of the windows and watch the activities of the Angolan peasants who lived nearby. Best of all, our Quatro uniforms were burnt and we were given second-hand clothing which had been donated by Sweden. We were also well fed.

The 'enemy agent' category of prisoners were required to make videotaped confessions which the ANC took to the OAU to use to solicit assistance, as they did not know where to send them. Yoweri Museveni was the chairman of the OAU at that time and he made

Uganda's Bokolota prison available to them.

I was to be sent to Dakawa in Tanzania. While I was waiting for transport, Abraham (of 'green grass' fame), whom I had first met as a recruit in Russia, drove up in a large DAF water tanker. He had not changed, he was as ebullient and pugnacious as ever. He was pleased to see me and never failed to bring me cigarettes whenever he had to top up the water supply of the warehouse. I was reminded of the occasion when, at Benguela camp in 1977, Abraham had been indulging in 'green grass' again and got into a fight with another MK cadre and kicked him in the face. (The cadres in the camp were all trained men and the camp commander was not as strict about liquor consumption as he would have been in a training camp.) The matter was reported to Mzwai Piliso, who berated him in front of a gathering of cadres. We were sitting on benches and Piliso was standing on the stoep of the commander's house. Abraham stood up, saying: 'I am not afraid of you,' and lurched forward to grab Piliso. Several of us immediately jumped up and grabbed Abraham. Piliso retaliated with: 'Let him come, I'll show him his mother!' I think that Piliso's bravado was encouraged by our restraint of Abraham – I would have put my money on Abraham.

Later, Abraham was to be sent back to infiltrate South Africa. While travelling on a train to Pietermaritzburg, he overdid the 'green grass' bit again and pulled out his Makarov pistol and started waving it in the air. Two passengers jumped him, disarmed him, beat him up and then handed him over to the South African Police who, I was told, turned him into an askari. Abraham was a colourful character, but he was not meant to be a soldier: discipline was anathema to him.

Our stay at the warehouse lasted a little more than two weeks. Miraculously we all recovered our strength, put on weight and began to look and feel fit. (In any event, we could hardly have been released in our Quatro condition.) At the end of the two weeks we were transported to Luanda, direct to the airport, and flown to Lusaka on a TAAG (Angolan Airways) aircraft.

From Lusaka we travelled by road to Tanzania, where our final destination was Dakawa, an interesting ANC settlement which up to this time I had heard very little about. Between six hundred and seven hundred people were housed in two villages and a large tent community called Hawaii. This multi-million dollar project was financed by the taxpayers of Norway and Finland and was supposed to be a model African farm, made available to the ANC until such time as South Africa was liberated, when it would revert to the Tanzanian government. The Norwegians and Finns didn't bother to find out

what their proteges were up to at Dakawa: only the Mbokodo were free to go wherever they wished there. Among the tent-dwellers was a large semi-permanent community of unregenerate heavy drinkers and criminals, people who were totally demotivated by their experiences in the MK and who had resigned from society. Their morale was low and there was a strong 'we are not interested in building pyramids in exile' feeling.

By the end of my first week at Dakawa I had come to the conclusion that almost everyone was very low in spirit. Unlike Quatro, there was no overt brutality, but the atmosphere was one of despair. Many of the demobbed MK were known to me because they had been in Angola back in 1984 and had participated in the call for the conference which of course never took place. After that debacle they had been tagged disloyal by the ANC leaders. A year later, in June 1985, another conference had been convened in Kabwe, Zambia (this was the conference where John Motshabi, the man I met in Luanda prison with Hani, was defeated in his attempt to topple Oliver Tambo for the leadership). Delegates had been voted for, appointed and approved by the office of the secretary general and chief of security. Nominees elected onto the National Executive Committee were those from a list presented by Oliver Tambo. The Mbokodo attended the conference as journalists or catering staff. They ended up voting even though they had no mandate to do so. Later they would gloat that the purpose of the conference had been subverted.

The conference had been tactically opened with the reading of a message sent by Comrade Nelson Mandela appealing for unity and rallying support for the leadership of Tambo. Unity was perceived to be far more important than democracy or the deep-seated problems in the ANC, and President Tambo hushed up the mutiny under the pretext that it could divide the ANC. His presidential report made no mention of it at all, and the pamphlet, 'Documents of the Second National Consultative Conference', published after the 1985 Kabwe conference, contains no hint that the majority of the ANC's trained troops in Angola had mutinied between January and May 1984 because the ANC leaders refused to abide by the ANC's own Freedom Charter. Those who had called for the conference were either dead or imprisoned in jails like Quatro, while their jailers and executioners packed the conference.

The men in Dakawa had become so disillusioned and frustrated by their leader's decisions, that they were on the point of losing faith in the ANC as a whole. They believed that no democratic formula was possible and that the entire structure was being run on communist

philosophy. They openly declared that their leaders were involved in a struggle not for freedom but for personal wealth. We were slaves of the ANC/SACP alliance, as we were not permitted to resign.

Millions of dollars, equipment and materials, funded especially by the Scandinavian countries, were pouring into the ANC coffers, designated for Dakawa settlement development, but the achievement was pitiful by the lowest of low standards. I discovered personally that only nine houses had been built over a six-year period (1983–89)! If I were a Norwegian or Finnish taxpayer, I would have asked the auditor-general to determine why the houses were so expensive! No one would ever be able to account for the missing fortune: with the exception of the nine houses and fleets of Volvo trucks and senior ranking officer's cars the money had disappeared without trace. (Later when the ANC attempted a 'reconciliation' of their assets they had to show that they *owned* Dakawa to 'balance' the books!)

At Dakawa I learnt of one of the bloodiest episodes in the MK's history. This had occurred at Pango Camp in May 1984, shortly after my incarceration in Luanda prison. After the suppression of the Viana mutiny the remaining MK soldiers were taken to Pango and Quibaxe camps, north of Luanda, where they were interviewed by the Stuart Commission. Thereafter, life became tough, a 'reorientation' course was introduced, the mutiny was portrayed as the work of 'enemy provocateurs'. Through intimidation, some of the cadres agreed to take the course but others resisted. The only armed personnel in the camp were those who were considered to be loyal to the leaders. The spark to this tinder box was provided by an incident which occurred at Pango, when, after some cadres had been beaten and tied to trees by the Mbokodo, the camp authorities pointed weapons at a 'culprit' who was between them and the cadres. On Sunday, 13 May 1984 the camp revolted. The armoury was stormed, the guards were disarmed and gun battles broke out which continued throughout the night. Zenzile Phungulwa, the camp commissar, Duke Maseko and a security guard were killed during the fighting. The camp commander and other loyalists fled and the camp was taken over by the mutineers. A squad of mutineers attempted to report the matter to the local Angolan authorities but they were intercepted by the Mbokodo and had to retreat.

The MK commanders mobilised a crack force from all their Angolan camps and encircled Pango. The following Friday morning loyalist troops under Timothy Mokoena attacked, and at dusk the camp was retaken. Approximately fourteen mutineers were killed, while some managed to escape and marched north through the bush.

Those captured were beaten and tortured by having melting plastic dripped on their naked bodies and genitals, they were tied to trees and whipped and were forced to exhume the decomposing bodies of the ANC loyalists killed in the previous Sunday's skirmish and wash them in preparation for a heroes' burial. A tribunal under Sizakhele Sigxashe was established and seven mutineers were summarily tried and executed. They were buried in a mass grave. James Nkabinde, Ronald Msomi, Bullet (Mbumbulu), Thembile Hobo, Mahero, Wandile Ondala and Stopper refused to budge an inch from their demand for a national conference, and went to face the firing squad with such courage that Chris Hani, who had endorsed their execution, was forced to comment that 'had this bravery and self-sacrifice been done for the cause of democracy and freedom in South Africa, it would have been praiseworthy'.

Later in the week fifteen escapees were caught in Uige Province. They had sought asylum from a Soviet garrison. To demonstrate their bona fides they had surrendered their weapons to the Soviet-FAPLA authorities. The Soviets notified the Mbokodo, who arrived in force and caught the escapees while sleeping. The men were bound hand and foot, thrown into trucks and beaten and tortured all the way back to Pango, where the brutal treatment continued until Gertrude Shope, the head of the ANC Women's Section, brought a halt to the executions and tortures. She also ordered that they be clothed. The Pango episode ended the armed resistance of MK cadres opposed to undemocratic governance.

The 1984 mutiny had a profound effect upon the political mood within the ANC, which remained shaky. The gulf between the cadres and the Mbokodo widened despite half-hearted attempts by the ANC to rectify matters. Cosmetic personnel changes were made and workshops were convened to examine the problems of the Security Department, to try and make it more palatable to the cadres, but these were superficial attempts which evaded sensitive issues and took no cognisance of the views of the victims. A major problem was that the Mbokodo had in effect been left intact. In addition, running battles with UNITA had been resumed in 1987 and the number of MK cadres being killed had escalated, while the effort to liberate South Africa – which had been of cardinal importance to the mutineers – had largely ground to a halt. Confidence in the ANC leadership was at an all-time low, and a sense of shame even pervaded the Mbokodo, but the cadres were too dispirited to protest, because the Security Department was still in control of all strategic positions. The result of

the emotional cross-currents was a frustrated, disillusioned and lethargic MK.

After the closure of Quatro, Fortunate (the former Quatro guard) arrived at Hawaii. People knew of the atrocities he had committed at Quatro and there was very strong resentment against the whole of the Mbokodo, so that accommodating him in Hawaii was tantamount to a death sentence. However, we former Quatro inmates became role models, because we had suffered most at the hands of the security department: the other tent dwellers took their cue from us and modelled their behaviour towards the guards on ours. We were mindful of Fortunate's late conversion and we assisted to gradually integrate him into the community. We tried hard – for our own sakes as well as his – to adopt a 'let bygones be bygones' approach.

My circle of friends consisted mainly of my former cell mates from Quatro, and Omry Makgoale. He had been one of the Soweto student leaders in the 1976 uprising and I had met him shortly thereafter. He was one of a group of forty students who had been sent to East Germany for training, most of whom became security men. The MK tended to place their best recruits in security. He later became Oliver Tambo's bodyguard and travelled all over the world with him. Omry spoke highly of Tambo, who had an exemplary personal life. However, at the 1980 detachment conference he had been vociferous in the demand for a consultative conference and he became a target of the Mbokodo. He was arrested and taken from Lusaka to Viana, where he was isolated and maltreated, and then sent to join a platoon at Pango doing hard labour. In the latter half of 1982 he was reintegrated into the Mbokodo and made district chief of staff, but in 1984 at the meeting of mutineers he was elected *in absentia* to represent the security department on the Committee of Ten, which led to his imprisonment at Quatro. Omry was a very stubborn but good person; he would not tolerate injustice.

At Dakawa the demobilised MK men were left to idle the days away doing nothing constructive. Every few weeks they would agitate for something to do but nothing happened. They demanded to be sent back to South Africa where they could be amongst their families and friends, but their pleas went unanswered. The growing dissatisfaction and boredom stood every chance of leading to a serious rebellion as the men lost their dignity. Whatever little work needed to be done was tackled without enthusiasm, interest, or pride. Their personal appearance deteriorated and they started drinking a crude raw spirit distilled in local villages. Something had to be done but since the ANC authorities seemed to be indifferent I gathered a few of my trusted

comrades to formulate some sort of plan to revive the lads.

It was an uphill task, but slowly we managed to convince them, one by one, that keeping busy, even if only by kicking a soccer ball around a field, finding some sort of work, engaging in open political discussions, cultural and religious debates would improve life for them. We started winning and quite soon were leading them on a 'happiness revival' campaign, as we liked to call it, from sunrise until late at night. The activity proceeded day after day and the local authority left us alone to get on with it. This really proved to be a happy time, probably the happiest period I had experienced since leaving Swaziland in 1975.

A month or so later we were visited by the ANC Secretary General, Alfred Nzo, who addressed the entire community. To my surprise he introduced my small group of comrades to the gathering, commending us for our integrity, and announced that we were to be integrated into the structure of the ANC and could elect or be elected into any ANC position. What was more, he stated that our loyalty to the organisation was not in doubt from any quarter and that we were a valuable asset which should be included in the growth and future consolidation of the party.

Shortly after his departure we were elected and appointed to powerful positions in the Zonal Political Administration in Dakawa – on the Zonal Youth Committee, a dynamic source of leadership encompassing all youth needs and activity. Our responsibility covered all educational, schooling, sport, cultural work and political philosophy. We put together a cultural ensemble of committed youngsters that was invited to tour Tanzania. The exercise was so successful that we received a further invitation from the Norwegian government to tour their country.

In April 1989 the third Dakawa seminar was convened to discuss and plan its future. This resulted in an official proposal being submitted to the ANC Central Committee recommending that a municipal administrative structure be created for the organised development of the Dakawa settlement. However our beliefs and hopes were dashed when, a week or two later, we were informed that the ANC leadership had rejected our proposal. No comment or reason explaining the rejection was forthcoming. My hopes that there was a change of heart taking place at the leadership level were in vain: the leopard would never change its spots.

In September 1989 the East African Regional Conference was held. On this occasion a new Regional Political Committee (RPC) consisting of four people was elected. I was one of them. In fact Omry

Makgoale and I – both former Quatro inmates – were elected to the two most powerful positions. I was given the position of organising secretary and Omry was made chairman of what would in effect become the most powerful and influential body of the whole ANC East African region. However, it wasn't long before the ANC Lusaka HQ cancelled the appointments, declaring that they refused to recognise the elections on constitutional grounds.

We demanded to know where the constitution authorised that we be denied our democratic choice of appointees. A swift reply came back telling us that we had elected the wrong people and HQ would appoint its own interim RPC. This decision really threw the cat amongst the pigeons at Dakawa, where it was rejected out of hand. Almost the entire body of the Lusaka-appointed interim RPC refused to participate in any way in an undemocratic structure and let this be known to Lusaka with extreme clarity.

On 14 December 1989, the annual general meeting of the Zonal Youth Committee in Dakawa was held. It was attended by SACP leader Rusty Bernstein, of the Regional Department of Political Education. At the meeting Sipho Phungulwa argued that ANC officials should not dictate who should be elected and that those elected to the RPC should refuse to participate in appointed dummy structures. Bernstein rejoined that he was happy to see the spirit of democracy. 'In my opinion', he said, 'the meeting was conducted in the spirit of perestroika and glasnost, a spirit that requires truth about things.' I am at a loss to explain how Bernstein reconciled his statement with the ANC's method of silencing dissidents.

That afternoon, as I sat alone and quiet watching the bright red tropical sun descend below the horizon, I realised that the communist monster had devoured the true idealism of the original Luthuli ANC version. After thirteen years in exile I didn't know that communism was in its last days. That evening in Dakawa it seemed to me as red and as powerful as the last ray of the descending sun.

On Christmas Eve all hopes of peace and goodwill were shattered by the arrival of Chris Hani and S Mabizela, both senior ranking members of the NEC, and a busload of security personnel followed by a convoy of Land Rovers filled with men armed to the teeth. They had arrived to address the community of Dakawa, having already visited other Regional Zones. To our dismay, at the end of the convoy were Tanzanian Defence Force soldiers, also armed.

Hani jumped from his vehicle and proceeded to puff his chest out and strut with all the arrogance of a cockerel, while barking orders like a dog. He proceeded to issue banning orders on all of us. These

orders were effective immediately and included our removal from all posts and responsibilities. We were not to participate in sport or cultural activities under any circumstances and failure to obey these orders carried serious penalties.

Bongani Matwa, who had served on the Viana Committee of Ten, was removed from his post, that of vice principal of Dakawa Vocational Training Centre, and Omry Makgoale was dismissed from the Zonal Political Committee and the Zonal Youth Committee. Hani sought me out and with a spiteful smirk announced my instant dismissal from the Regional Committee by NEC decree. My surprise was mixed with relief when I realised he had not mentioned my daily occupation as manager of the brick making, prefabricated walls, panels and columns factory. The omission meant I was, that day at least, not destined to be imprisoned back in Quatro or any other such camp.

Pleased as I was that I would be staying at Dakawa, it crossed my mind that my management job was still mine because there was no one readily available with my know-how. The fact of the matter was that during my stay at the settlement, three willing comrades had helped me build an adult education school comprising five classrooms. Furthermore I had organised and motivated a team of ex-MKs to build more houses, adding to the existing nine. I had taught them brick laying and plastering years before in Quatro and although at first they were reticent about doing it, I talked them into it and they admitted eventually that they enjoyed the work. Our pride was that a handful of us built a total of fifty five houses in seven months.

Shortly after Hani left Dakawa we witnessed the number of Mbokodo growing each day. What was left of the positive attitude of the community started to wilt. Then, between Christmas and New Year, I heard that there were plans to kidnap and assassinate some of us: Hani had given orders for it to be arranged at a convenient moment. I presume this meant there were to be no witnesses. A group of eighteen of us decided that we had no alternative but to escape from Dakawa.

One of our group was a young Xhosa woman by the name of Patricia Breakfast who came from the Transkei. She was tall and stout and her MK name was Makie. She was stationed at Camp 18 at Dakawa, which was where new recruits were screened and, if suspected of being enemy agents, tortured. (Many young people joined the ANC in exile in an attempt to further their education, which had been disrupted by the political events taking place in South Africa. Many of them had no certification of their scholastic progress and at

the Ruth First training centre they were assessed and coached. Some would be sent to the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, which was a secondary school near Morogoro; others would receive scholarships to study at universities overseas. A student who refused a scholarship to a socialist country was immediately suspect.) Among her other duties Makie was responsible for cleaning and she told me that it was not uncommon for her to find, when she arrived in the mornings to do the cleaning, blood-spattered walls or even a body lying on the floor covered with newspapers, which would later be removed in a blanket for burial in a shallow grave.

Makie was the first to warn us that we were not safe. She had come to join our group because of her love for Callaghan: soon they were living together and later when they returned to South Africa they had a son, but finally parted ways. She also had a toddler from a previous love affair. Her relationship with Callaghan and her concern for her safety once he left were what compelled her to join us.

Another woman in our group was Nontyatyambo, an attractive young Xhosa who had been a security guard at Quatro. She confessed to me that she had tortured Olivia Forsyth, the South African spy. She was basically a kind-hearted person who felt remorse for her previous behaviour; she had arrived at Quatro as an indoctrinated teenager with a deep hatred of whites. She told me that our cell had been considered the most dangerous at Quatro. She had been transferred to Dakawa after she became pregnant and was for a while a room mate with Makie. Her daughter was born at Dakawa. She had had a difficult time at Dakawa because of the large number of demobilised mutineers, some of whom ill-treated her, and when we arrived she expected to receive even worse treatment from us, but we realised that the cycle of hatred had to be broken and that we should accept her and try to rehabilitate her. She and Diliza Mtembu fell in love and eventually got married when they finally reached South Africa. Nontyatyambo was also in the security department and her colleagues tried to discourage her relationship with Diliza. She too felt apprehensive about what would happen to her once we had left.

Shortly before our anticipated departure Omry Makgoale and I were told that we had been awarded scholarships in East Germany. This news came as a shock and tore me with indecision. On the one hand I would have dearly loved to gain a university education and I was tempted not to participate in the escape attempt, but on the other I was deeply suspicious as to whether the scholarship would in fact materialise – was it possibly a trick? I had endured five years of imprisonment and I had no wish to risk any more. For me, the deciding

factor was the feeling that I would be letting my comrades down if I did not participate. Omry's decision was complicated by the arrival at Dakawa of his mother for a short visit, and this ultimately prevented him from joining us. When his mother went to the airport to leave Tanzania she was apprehended by the Mbokodo and searched, and all the letters that she had been requested by Dakawa inmates to mail to their families in South Africa were confiscated.

After Chris Hani's visit to Dakawa I sensed that Omry had changed; I think he had become rebellion-weary. He did go to East Germany to study and I met him upon his return to South Africa in 1992, but he was afraid to associate with me, he feared that his parents' home, where he was staying, would be burnt down in retribution.

We spent every spare hour planning a means of escape from Dakawa but nothing was resolved. We were in a strange environment, with only a vague idea of exactly where we were in relation to Dar es Salaam. (We were over three thousand kilometres from home as the crow flies!) The local language was also totally foreign to us, which added to our predicament. Just as we were prepared to accept the desperate nature of our position, lady luck came out of the blue with the answer in the last week of December 1989.

An announcement was made that all personnel involved in construction work were to be taken for a two-day New Year holiday to Dar es Salaam. To my utter surprise I and my trusted conspirator colleagues were included. Our joy was complete as we realised this was the opportunity we had prayed for. I need to explain that although Dakawa was an ANC settlement, with planning and building development managed by the ANC and their own construction teams, private Tanzanian contractors also played a part. It was they who extended the holiday invitation to us, and the Mbokodo were not aware of our intended departure. For 24 hours we hardly dared to breathe, fully expecting that our holiday plans would be discovered.

After breakfast on the morning of 31 December we were told by our construction colleagues to prepare for the bus trip to the coast. We packed some lightweight clothes in small shoulder bags and made our way to the designated pick-up points, first making sure to surround ourselves with legitimate people to minimise the risk of being observed by any curious security guards. That was the longest walk in my life, although the actual distance was not more than 200 metres. Once we got to the buses it was an easy matter to stay secure amongst the happy holiday makers. Having taken our seats we turned our backs to the windows, just in case. Ten minutes later the buses passed

through the main gate and headed in the direction of our goal, Dar es Salaam, some three hours' ride away.

Only then did we relax and join in the fun and excitement. It reminded me of my childhood Sunday school trips and little tears formed and ran down my cheeks whilst my heart and mind bombarded me with doubt and hope! Somebody pushed a Coke into my hand, bottle-top removed, and I swallowed in one gulp almost, the most beautiful Coke I have ever tasted in my life. A few hours later we let out a simultaneous whoop as we had our first glimpse of the Indian Ocean, blue and sparkling in the midday sun. It was a very emotional moment, particularly as it seemed to say to me 'Mwezi, you are free!'

Yes! Those words in my heart were to be prophetically true, although there was still a long and difficult road ahead. The bus made its way through the outer suburbs of Dar es Salaam to its final destination, a private beach of white sand lapped by a gentle blue sea. The beauty and tranquillity of it all was overwhelming as we disembarked, stripped down to our swimming trunks (mostly underwear) and started collecting sunbleached driftwood and branches tossed on the beach by the sea. In half an hour we had a crackling fire on the go, ready to cook the massive pile of meat and mealies transported by truck from Dakawa. The project manager Dennis Oswald had seen to it that we would be well provided for over the forty-eight hours of our holiday.

As the day progressed my colleagues and I were able to separate ourselves from the main body of the group and discuss a plan of action. We had plenty of time to observe our surroundings and establish that the beach we were on was a few kilometres from the suburb of Temeke, where I had stayed many years ago *en route* to Russia – and where, according to an informant in Dakawa, there was a guest house that would take in dissidents. Late that night, filled to the brim with good food and exhausted by athletic exercise in the sea and on the beach, the entire group fell into a deep sleep under a warm starlit sky.

On New Year's morning we had a swim, enjoyed a mighty breakfast and prepared ourselves for escape. It was announced that we would depart on our return trip to Dakawa at 1800 hours. We had discovered that one of the men in the group, the driver who had transported the food from Dakawa in a large lorry, was sympathetic towards us, so we decided to risk taking him into our confidence. He listened to our story and suggested that if we chose to board his vehicle unseen, that was our decision. He would deny knowledge of our presence in the event that we were caught. When we reached

Temeke there would be plenty of safe opportunities to jump off.

As the deadline for departure approached, we made our way as casually as we could from the beach up to the transport and one by one quickly boarded the VTC truck, which fortunately had a canopy cover. We huddled down as best we could and waited. After about thirty minutes we heard the voices of the main group as they approached the buses. No one appeared to show any interest in our truck. The engines were started; our driver without so much as a glance noisily got into the cab, started up the engine, engaged his gears and jerked into movement at the rear of the small convoy which proceeded to thread its way back to Dakawa. After half an hour we heard the driver singing a tuneless song at the top of his voice, the words of which were simply: 'We're in Temeke, we're in Temeke ...' We smiled and prepared to disembark at the first stop. This came within a few minutes.

I gave the all clear and within a few seconds each of us was walking as the truck roared off into the distance. The sun was setting very fast and soon we were just locals strolling through the neighbourhood on a leisurely evening walkabout. We made our way to the address I had been given and were made welcome on a 'no questions asked' basis. Once our rooms had been established we dumped our meagre belongings and wandered around meeting some of the other occupants. More than a dozen dissidents were lodging there, men and women who had escaped from Dakawa, all of them non-construction workers. From this, we deduced that they were fellow ANC members, but no one talked more than necessary.

Next morning the people managing the guest house told us which bus to catch to Dar es Salaam itself – valuable knowledge, as with it we never needed to ask strangers on the street, a dead giveaway that we were strangers in town. When we arrived at the city centre no one so much as glanced at us, although I must confess my heart was working overtime with apprehension. Strolling with the slow-walking locals, we made our way to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offices to seek their protection, asylum and, we hoped, safety.

9. Dar es Salaam

When we arrived at the UNHCR building our hearts dropped, for there we witnessed a long queue of pitiful emaciated refugees, men, women and infants from Somalia, Uganda and Kenya, all seeking audience with the UN protection officer. After some very hot hours in the queue we were eventually ushered into the premises and presented ourselves to Dr Dambzensky, the American Polish gentleman who was resident protection officer of the UNHCR in Tanzania.

While he would be very helpful to us in the near future, Dr Dambzensky was obliged to be nonpartisan in his dealings with us under his UN mandate. When we simply asked for asylum, not understanding the bureaucratic system, he smiled gently and asked us to explain who we were, where we originated and how we had arrived at his office in Dar es Salaam. We answered by giving him an outline of our years in exile with the ANC, telling most of the extreme experiences we had suffered together with eye-witness accounts of the barbaric treatment meted out to others. Dr Dambzensky was one of the best and most gifted listeners I have ever met. Not once did he interject, he simply sat and waited for us to finish.

My story completed, I sat back and stared up at the giant fan above us whose whirring was the only sound in the office. I was delighted when Dr Dambzensky reached for his telephone and asked someone to organise a large pot of tea for six. Putting the telephone back on its cradle, he sat gently drumming his fingers on the desk and I suddenly had the heart-stopping thought that the call for tea was some secret code for Mbokodo security to come immediately and arrest us. He cleared his throat and calmly explained the procedure we must follow. Very precisely he spelt out that South African proclaimed refugees must adhere to an agreement made between the ANC, PAC, Tanzanian government and UNHCR. This agreement laid out loud

and clear that applicants must first resign in writing from whichever liberation movement they belonged to, in our case, the ANC. The ANC leadership (NEC) must accept the resignation request and present their official confirmation of the resignation to the office of the Prime Minister of Tanzania, because this was the only office officially recognised by the liberation group within the agreement. On receipt of this confirmation the Prime Minister's Office would forward a memo to the Tanzanian Minister of Home Affairs who would issue a note to the applicant to take to the UNHCR offices so that the applicant could apply for UN asylum. This procedure was peculiar to the South African 'agreement': refugees of all other nationalities were simply cleared by the Home Affairs Ministry and then granted almost automatic asylum by UNHCR.

As we sat and listened to this charming man my heart seemed to have settled forever deep down in my left foot. I was very thankful for the timely arrival of the tea because it gave me the break I desperately needed. My throat was as dry as a desert and my tongue filled my mouth to bursting. I picked up my cup and saucer trying not to show my nervousness and slowly sipped at the fabulous beverage. My mind was completely numb. One thing I did clearly understand, we were in big trouble! It was obvious that the system's legal way was out of the question for us.

Dr Dambzensky continued, warning us that even with UN clearance, South African refugees in Tanzania, Zambia and Angola were not safe. He told us that everyone knew the Mbokodo to be kidnappers and murderers of ANC dissidents under UNHCR protection, and he quoted several incidents known to him. We also learnt that South African UN refugees were not allowed to stay in Dar es Salaam. They were kept in a rural refugee settlement named Kiga, near the Ugandan border. Each refugee was given a scant month's supply of foodstuff, an axe and a hoe, together with a small sack of seeds, and allocated a small uncleared allotment. There he was expected to clear his land and till the soil and finally plant his seeds. This exercise was termed the 'Refugee Self-Help Scheme'.

I knew that we would have to find an alternative escape route for ourselves. For most South Africans the 'self-help system' was a total disaster because most of us came from urban ghettos where the only means of survival was working in factories, or as traders or bricklayers. The system would be suicidal as far as we could see, but of course I did not reveal my feelings to Dr Dambzensky. There was a lot more I needed to know and this gentleman was a mine of information. We also learnt that South African refugees, even with legal

clearance, were not allowed to leave Tanzania. This restriction even applied to those who had been granted scholarships or jobs in other countries. It seemed that UN travel documents were available to everyone except South Africans.

To our amazement, Dr Dambzensky informed us that because our case was of a political nature, he would waive all the bureaucratic procedures laid down by the liberation movements with the Tanzanian government and grant us asylum. He emphasised once more that this act did not protect us nor guarantee our safety. With that the meeting closed and we made our way into the oppressive heat of the day. We had some important decisions to make.

During the meeting I had made a note of the fact that the wife of the Tanzanian Prime Minister was also the UNHCR's welfare officer, which meant that our affair would soon be known in detail at his office. Our final decision, after a day of anxious debate, was that I should represent our group, take the bull by the horns and make a direct approach to the Prime Minister's Office, rather sooner than later.

Nervously I went to the appropriate offices and made a request to meet with the secretary to the first minister. Much to my surprise I was ushered into his office within half an hour and made to feel welcome. I could not help being suspicious: this felt too good to be true, it had to be some kind of trap. In fact, he was quite understanding as I spelt out my problem and proved to be well informed, which confirmed in my mind that the Prime Minister's wife had done her job well. To my astonishment, he revealed that Chris Hani had visited him prior to our Dakawa meeting on 24 December 1989 to inform him that he expected a confrontation in Dakawa and request that the armed Tanzanian Peoples Defence Force (TPDF) be deployed in Dakawa to assist the ANC in putting down the anticipated insurrection.

At that point the Minister's secretary stood up and told me to report to his office the following morning at 1000 hours sharp with my colleagues. He explained nothing more and dismissed me.

The next day, 3 January 1990, the four of us reported to his office at the designated time. We had agreed to make no reference to the UNHCR offer of asylum. The meeting was to take place in a conference room. Our escort tapped at the door, opened it and we walked into a well-appointed room in the centre of which was a large highly polished oak boardroom table surrounded by beautiful antique-style chairs. We were greeted by the Prime Minister's secretary, who introduced us to the other two men present. They were the ANC

Chief Representative in Tanzania, Manzini, and the ANC Regional Security Chief, Mojo.

We sat down and the silence was broken by the secretary, who confirmed that he would act as mediator between the two parties. I listened with a pounding heart and dry mouth, caused partly by fear and partly by an overwhelming anger growing in me. As he completed his opening statement I immediately responded by stating that these two men were simply convenient appointees of the ANC leadership who, with respect, could not be expected to offer any constructive advice or solutions to our problems. The best we could expect was that they could act as errand boys since, as new MK members (they were 1984 recruits), they could have no concept of problems which had been building up since mid-1970. Our differences could only be resolved at NEC level, and that in essence was what we were seeking, but this could only be held on politically neutral ground for our own safety.

I finished what I had to say by telling them that I felt sorry for the situation they found themselves in, for our refusal to negotiate could easily be construed by their bosses as failure on their part, which in turn could have life-threatening consequences for them, a situation I had personally experienced and witnessed more than a dozen times. Their eyes grew very large with fear as the secretary lost his diplomatic cool and broke in telling me to stop at once. He continued in a threatening voice, telling us that we should return to Dakawa immediately and resign from the ANC in the proper way.

I thought fast and furious. How could I retrieve his goodwill, and save the situation? I apologised for my outburst, which he seemed to accept by his body language, and quietly asked him whether he would please let me explain to him in as few words as I could, the reality of our dilemma. He graciously acceded to my request and called for a tray of tea for seven before I continued.

Tea served, the secretary gestured to me, saying: 'Mr Twala, say your piece, but I must depart in ten minutes' time.' I proceeded, telling them that what they would hear was not a fairy tale, but facts which everyone could learn from, especially the two inexperienced MK men. They should first understand that ANC (and MK) membership is a voluntary act by the individual and that each member is free to resign when he or she so wishes, as laid down in the ANC constitution. During my years in exile I had trained and waited for the day when I would return to eliminate South Africa's white minority regime and destroy apartheid once and for all. That was the only purpose for which I had voluntarily dedicated myself to the ANC and was still my obsession. But over the years I had seen the takeover of

the true ANC and its ideals by a communist element which had, like a creeping cancer, silently eaten its way to total power and destroyed it just like the disease that destroys a healthy body. For this reason the ANC/Communist Alliance had destroyed every vestige of democratic principles and had, as communism had done wherever it took root, replaced happiness and vision with misery and helplessness except for the sycophants, the yes-men and women. All I had done during my service to the true ANC ideal was to criticise those activities that were communist-inspired and unacceptable to hundreds like me. For this I had been labelled a dissident and suffered torture and near death many times: in fact, it was beyond my understanding that I had survived. From these revelations and experiences I understood and was convinced that there was no future for me within this disgusting regime.

For these reasons I wished to resign from the MK, as did thousands of friends and colleagues, and remove myself to South Africa where I would be able to be part of a negotiating forum for the good of all South Africans, including my wife and family. During my active ANC life I had seen with my own eyes torture, bestiality and death handed out to young men whose only crime had been their desire to resign in order to advance their education.

I told the secretary and the two ANC officials about Solly, Drake and Ndabezitha (cousins and uncles of both Chief Buthelezi and King Zwelithini respectively), an event which took place in 1979. The three of them had gone to Luanda to present their resignations personally to Max Moabi, Chief Representative of the ANC in Angola, but Mzwai Piliso, on hearing their request, ordered that they be arrested. During their arrest they were subjected to unmerciful beatings, after which they were thrown into the Quatro death camp. The ANC executive used this incident as an example to the rank and file that resignations would not be tolerated. My story was finished, my point was made and I sat back hoping the secretary and the two ANC men realised and understood our dilemma if only in small measure.

Mr Manzini followed up by suggesting we meet with him at his home in Temeke the following day at 1800 hours to discuss the problem in its entirety and hopefully reach a mutually agreeable solution. I could see potential danger in this suggestion but knew we had been outflanked in front of the secretary who saw it as a reasonable offer. If we had rejected it out of hand I am certain that he would have had us detained overnight and forcibly taken to Mr Manzini's home the next day.

In retrospect it was amazing that we were not detained; it certainly

would have made things easier for them. The meeting was closed and we were free to leave. We made our way back to the guest house deep in thought and agreed that although the risk was great, we should attend the meeting the following evening. For safety's sake, however, we decided to split up into smaller groups and disperse, as we were too conspicuous as one large group. Six of us hired two rooms: in the first slept Diliza, Nontyatyambo and her daughter, and in the second David, Nicholas and I slept on the floor. The rest split and stayed in two other guest houses. The temptation to leave town and disappear, with the objective of somehow making our own way out of Tanzania to Malawi or Kenya, was great, but we knew our chance of success was very slim.

At 1800 hours we arrived at Mr Manzini's home where there were many security boys and a couple of armed TPDF soldiers in evidence, much to our consternation. We entered the house under the watchful eyes of the guards and were met by an ANC officer and a couple of his men. Chief Representative Manzini was nowhere to be seen but we were committed to listen to the officer who took us to a small debriefing room complete with a tape recorder. The officer told us that Mr Manzini had briefed him and proceeded to advise us that our cooperation would make life easier for us. He insisted that we were to be separated in order to make our statements and requests on tape as individuals, not as a group with one spokesman.

I glanced at the tape recorder and realised that it was already rolling, capturing everything being said. We reacted as one man and stated that we were not going to be split up under any circumstances but would answer his questions as they were posed, as a group. The atmosphere was ominous for a few long minutes but we knew we had broken the attempt to intimidate us. The officer, with a gesture of submission, agreed that we could stay together and asked us to speak clearly. At first I thought that we were going to be questioned (third degree) by the officer but it transpired that we were required to record our reasons and motives for wanting to resign. In turn each of our group spoke up, interrupted every so often with intimidatory remarks and veiled threats, but they did not succeed in stopping us.

At last we had run out of words and the room was silent, the recorder was switched off and the officer turned to us and barked that we should return to Dakawa immediately and resign by way of the official channels. He added we were free to leave the house and urged us to think seriously about the fact that we had no option – it was Dakawa or nothing and they were giving us twenty-four hours to decide to return voluntarily. We returned to our guest house and

agreed that to go to Dakawa was a death penalty, leaving us no alternative but to move on as soon as possible.

The following morning we were shaken by the sudden arrival of Mojo and Manzini accompanied by a team of Mbokodo security boys who issued orders that we must leave for Dakawa immediately. They warned that if any one of us was found at the guest house that afternoon he would be severely punished. Two of our group were so intimidated they packed and left immediately, with no warning of any kind. My remaining colleagues and I couldn't accept that they had dumped us after everything we had been through. We couldn't be sure that they had not been kidnapped by the Mbokodo or arrested by the Tanzanian police for lack of identity documents ... or maybe they had gone for cover and found other accommodation elsewhere in Dar es Salaam. (Many months later I discovered they had successfully reached Kenya.)

Because of Mojo's threats our first priority was to find somewhere reasonably safe to stay. The only funds we had at the time came by way of the UNHCR grants, not a great sum but better than nothing. We decided to move to Keko, to a ghetto where we were able to rent two rooms which had the bare necessities. After we had paid the rent we still had enough money for daily survival. We slept on the concrete floor on top of our few clothes, not needing blankets because of the near equatorial heat. Food was cooked on a charcoal brazier outside the building. All in all we felt safe and satisfied with our lot, especially as we got to know some of our neighbours and their circumstances.

We befriended a Tanzanian advocate who lived there with his family in three rented rooms. He had had his own practice in Dar es Salaam for over twenty years, yet he had not acquired enough money to buy his own house. I was shocked to see professional people such as doctors, lawyers, teachers and highly qualified engineers living in such poor conditions on salaries that no self-respecting newspaper boy in Johannesburg would tolerate. Some of them told me with pride and self-esteem that at least they were not below the poverty datum line and didn't have to resort to begging and searching garbage piles for crusts of bread. They were given their own small *shambas* (peasant farms) on which they were expected to put in extra labour for subsistence. A medieval form of socialism, but they had nothing to compare their situation with and consequently were quite patriotic.

Living as we were in Keko, the only news we heard was by word of mouth. Through this system we heard that PAC officials from the Dar es Salaam office had given a sympathetic hearing to some of our ANC

colleagues who had approached them seeking aid. Not long after hearing this promising news we too managed to obtain a hearing.

During our short time at Keko our group had grown to include three more men and three pregnant women with three small children, all former detainees with one idea, to return to South Africa. As former detainees of the 'hell' camps many of them were sickly in one way or another and we explained to the PAC officials that we desperately needed financial aid to supplement our UN grants in order to help us meet medical costs and the purchase of more nutritious food. The humane and sympathetic attitude of the PAC men was a new experience for us. There were no bullyboy snarls and threats. They were as generous as they could be, given that they too were walking on broken glass, trying not to offend the powers that be – and believe me, the smallest incident, a blink of the eye at the wrong second, could bring about a *persona non grata* situation.

Since our group was scattered it was decided that I, with a couple of nominated colleagues, would meet with the PAC officials on behalf of the entire ex-detainee group a few days later. Although it was risky for us personally, it was decided to meet at our old guest house in Temeke.

On the appointed day we arrived in Temeke and booked into the guest house for the night. True to their promise, the PAC officials arrived and patiently listened to our story, finally announcing their willingness to augment the UNHCR grants with medical, financial and food aid and promising to get back to us as soon as possible with a plan of implementation. The meeting was closed and I and my group made our way to our rooms, much relieved to have found allies at long last.

Our joy was short lived, however, because at about 0900 hours the following morning three Tanzanian security officials in the guise of immigration officers descended upon us. They angrily denounced our status in Tanzania and ordered us to leave with them instantly for the immigration offices, where the problem could be resolved finally one way or the other. It was pointless to argue or resist, so we quietly complied with their demands and climbed into their Land Rover.

On arrival at the immigration building we soon found out that the whole exercise was a big deception. I had known that our visit to Temeke was risky but I had expected the possible problem to come from the Mbokodo, not the Tanzanians. The officials told the women and children to return to the guest house and consider themselves under house arrest, warning them that this meant they were not to leave the building under any circumstances without explicit approval.

Callaghan, Valdez, Diliza, Edward and I were then taken to the Dar es Salaam Central Prison.

Our reception was an occasion of great confusion amongst the staff. They couldn't agree as to how the detention warrant should be drawn up, since we were not run of the mill cases. It appeared that we were a special category of 'indefinite detainee'. The reception officers finally shrugged their shoulders and completed the warrants as instructed. We were then searched and relieved of shoes, belts, watches, cigarettes and money. The faces of my colleagues were masterpieces of confusion and astonishment, but I managed to advise them to say nothing and not resist. Thankfully they got the message and suffered no heavy handed treatment. We were then escorted down some stairs to underground cells, where our jailers put Valdez, Diliza and me in one cell and Callaghan and Edward in another opposite to us.

Our cell was designed to hold two inmates in reasonable comfort, but because of the speed and the shock of our arrest I really hadn't been conscious of anything around me. It hit me like a bomb when I realised as the cell door clanged shut that the cell was already occupied by thirteen prisoners. In the gloom of the dungeon-like basement I could feel the glare of all those pairs of eyes beaming like lasers into us. No one said a word for quite a few minutes until I croaked out a dry greeting. They responded in various tones and grunts, but I realised that they were curious and thankfully not antagonistic. We introduced ourselves by name and slowly we all relaxed as best we could.

Over the next half-hour we were able to identify the self-styled controllers of the cell. They were all local criminals caught for doing whatever they did best, but they generously shared their smuggled-in cigarettes with us. Their main language was a sort of Swahili slang unique to Dar es Salaam hoodlums, but a couple of the leaders spoke English. In the course of the easy conversation, filled with enjoyable humour, one of them mentioned that he was an acquaintance of a South African guy named Zweni Mzwakhe, a former PAC member now living in Dar es Salaam, well known and involved in the underground activities of the city. Every one of the criminals revealed their knowledge of this man and their liking and respect for him. I was overjoyed because Mzwakhe was the man who had helped us to find accommodation in Keko, but until our involuntary incarceration with this bunch of happy-go-lucky scoundrels I hadn't known much about him. I told them that I too had received help from him and the flood-gates opened as they told me his story. Apparently he played the

middle-man role as agent or broker on any item or service you might require. Building materials, cars, passports, or drugs, to name but a few, were all available at a price. No one asked where the goods came from, no one in that market cared, they simply paid cash and the deal was made. If one wanted to offload a shipment of goods, Mzwakhe would broker it at a price to quick buyers, no questions asked. For all his dubious activities and business dealings he was respected and in many ways loved for his kindness to those in trouble. It was well known that he assisted South Africans who had money problems or were in need of documents to ease their way through officialdom, yet never involved those he helped in his criminal career.

Because we had known Zweni for a fleeting moment the hoodlums took us to their hearts, treated us well and gave us maximum space for our comfort, notwithstanding the fact that we were packed like sardines. The overall conditions in this prison were typical of all the similar African institutions we had had the misfortune to spend our time in during the previous fifteen years: filthy, with broken-down plumbing, a total absence of hygienic norms and pig-swill food served in the cell on large upturned dustbin lids and scooped by hand and fingers to the mouth. There was something comical about the spectacle of fifteen hands diving into the stew followed by fifteen hungry men vigorously sucking their fingers clean before diving back into the tasteless mess.

It was difficult to discuss anything in private but we managed to come to an agreement that we would undertake a hunger-strike in an attempt to force the authorities to explain what charges we were being detained on. News reached us via the grapevine that on the very day of our arrest Mr Walter Sisulu, the Secretary General of the ANC, and his entourage had arrived in Tanzania. We wondered if there was a link between our incarceration and Sisulu's visit or if it was simply a crazy coincidence.

One day, just after lunch-time, we were summoned by two warders to follow them to the prison office section where we were to join some PAC officials and Tanzanian senior police officers, who to our surprise wanted to know the reason for our detention. While the five of us looked at each other in curiosity and amusement, not quite knowing how to answer their question, they presented us with an assortment of food and cigarettes. In turn, they were taken aback when we refused the food and told them cigarettes were not permitted in the cells. Apologetically, the Tanzanian Police Officers ordered the escort guards not to confiscate our cigarettes. One thing was obvious: the PAC men were in the know about our situation. Although our

imprisonment warrant registered that we were to be detained indefinitely, their presence heartened us

It was good to know that the PAC were sympathetic to our predicament and might be able to speak on our behalf with the Tanzanian Government. It was widely acknowledged that the Tanzanian powers were split into those who supported the ANC, on the one hand, and the PAC, on the other. Corruption was rife throughout the entire government and civil service structures, due mainly to the fact that the civil servants could not make ends meet on their poverty-line salaries. Bribery was simple because payments could be made with rice, sugar, tinned foods, whisky or clothing such as jeans, cigarettes and even bubble-gum. The ANC were regarded as being 'the specialists' when it came to wheeler-dealing with officialdom, particularly with members of the ruling party. This relationship was our greatest danger and left us in doubt as to the ability of the PAC to bring about positive action on our behalf.

We never found out who did what, or who spoke to whom, but on our ninth day in the prison we were visited by the security officers who had arrested us at Temeke. They unlocked our cell and told us that we were free to go. In a pleasant manner they apologised, telling us that it was all the result of a misunderstanding by the Ministry of Home Affairs from whom they took their orders.

Although we knew that we were an irritant to certain individuals in the various government departments, we persisted in seeking an explanation for our imprisonment, but the secretary avoided us, eventually passing us on to a lady employed in his office who in turn explained that two ANC officials, namely Manzini and Mojo, had requested we be detained indefinitely by the Tanzanian security police before the impending arrival of Walter Sisulu. (This confirmed our suspicions based on the rumours we had heard during the first few days of our incarceration.) She also told us that our threatened hunger strike had caused concern amongst the Tanzanians who had reported our intentions to the ANC office in Dar es Salaam. No response had come from the ANC and subsequently, two days after Sisulu's departure, it was decided to release us. It was good to be free again but the whole episode had sharpened our awareness of the need for caution. We reminded ourselves that the purpose of our stay in Dar es Salaam was to find our way back to South Africa.

The first decision we made was to spread out from the city and find a safer, less obvious lodging. I teamed up with Nicholas Dyasop and we started searching for a suitable home. We eventually found the ideal answer in an incredible ghetto where friendly people in their

hundreds were our protective neighbours. No stranger who entered the ghetto could take ten steps without our knowing about it – and nothing resembling a policeman could take two steps before we got the buzz!

The population of this ghetto ranged from pure Arabs to Africans from every tribe in Africa, mulattos and contented whites, an unbelievable mixture of strangely happy people, trading in an equally unbelievable range of merchandise. Having established our credentials with the people, we started planning our future moves. The ghetto was located reasonably close to the centre of Dar es Salaam, but a journey there entailed three bus changes. On the surface this implied some inconvenience but it also served as a security device because we were never in one bus long enough to become involved with curious fellow passengers, and because the bus service was frequent, we could vary our timing, which further enhanced our security. Our strategy was to approach every one of the embassies and consulates in Dar es Salaam and explain our predicament to whoever would listen. This exercise did us little good but was to prove very educational and revealing in the context of diplomatic sophistry, double-talk and futility.

The US Embassy was kind to the extent that they gave us over to one of their staff who wanted to hear the whole story. He listened avidly, making copious notes of our experiences in Mozambique, Angola and of course Tanzania. Although our story took a few hours to tell, he showed no impatience or need to hurry; on the contrary his interest was so profound, he happily spent time clearing up confusion to his satisfaction. With typical American generosity he provided us with a constant flow of miraculous ice-cold Cokes, wonderful sandwiches and cookies, topped-off with genuine American cigarettes of all makes. We concluded our story, took a break and then settled down to listen to his suggestions as to where we should be going, hopefully with his help. He responded by telling us that he would recommend that we be helped to be repatriated back to our own country or, alternatively, that we immigrate to a friendly country of our choice. This recommendation would be classified and confidential, and would be forwarded to Washington for approval and possible action. If and when he received their answer we would be notified. Feeling buoyant we left the US Embassy too late in the day to make another call and so decided to return to the ghetto and safety.

Early the following morning we made for the embassy of the USSR, where the atmosphere was cold and forbidding. But we met with an embassy representative (KGB) who listened to our story for

about thirty minutes and then abruptly halted the proceedings, telling us to write out the story (or report, as he put it), give it to him and he would see to it that Headquarters in Moscow received it. We suggested that the report would take a day or two to complete and we would return with it as soon as possible. It was our first and last visit to the Russian Embassy, for we knew the written report would certainly land up in the hands of the SACP/ANC leadership.

Coincidentally, at this time (February 1990) we heard that the President of South Africa, Mr de Klerk, had made his announcement on the unbanning of all political organisations and the release of Mr Nelson Mandela. The possibilities implicit in the announcement sharpened our desire to return to South Africa. But we still realised that we should play our cards close to our chests and proceed cautiously, keeping away from our proven antagonists.

Our third visit took us to the Embassy of Malawi. If we could get into that country, we stood a very good chance of being repatriated to our own country through the South African Embassy in Lilongwe. It was also a comfort to us that the relationship between the two countries had been friendly for many years. We met with a Malawian official at his office, briefed him on our situation and our need for his advice and all the help he could give us. As with the USA embassy, we were told kindly that we must stay in contact with his office until he had received a communique from Lilongwe, which he fully expected would take a few days.

We decided to approach the British and German Embassies the following day. We visited both of them with time to spare because each visit proved to be curt and indifferent, both for the identical reason, that they only did business with official ANC representatives. Disappointed, we returned to the ghetto, pinning our hopes on the USA and Malawi responses. I thought about our chances of survival and reaching our objective and after many hours of thinking and rethinking about the best course of action to take, I decided that we must move soon even if we received no help from others. Everyone completely agreed with my suggestions.

Confirmation that our decision was the right one came in the form of information supplied by a couple of Tanzanian security men who had previously arrested us. What caused them to feel compassion for us I will never know, but it was a most welcome happening. We were told that Mandela was due to visit Tanzania within the next day or two, no one knew for what purpose, but the Tanzanian Home Affairs Ministry had been approached by senior Mbokodo men who had apparently once again requested our immediate arrest and indefinite

detention. The Home Affairs secretary had refused the request, his reason being that he had burnt his fingers the previous time and until he received orders from the top ANC office he would do nothing.

Our Tanzanian security friends further warned us that there was a noticeable influx of Mbokodo in and around Dar es Salaam, which was interpreted as a concerted drive to round-up dissidents like us. Knowing of their bloodthirsty activities and being very aware of the fact we could well be at the top of their 'most wanted' list, we decided there and then that the best thing we could do was lie low as we were doing, and plan to escape to a neighbouring state as soon as it was feasible.

Staying in Tanzania without going underground was desirable because we could still receive our UNHCR financial grants – which, although small, were vital to our needs. However, since it was necessary for us to collect this allowance personally on due date at the UNHCR offices, and since the Mbokodo would certainly know about this soon, after long discussions we decided that the money wasn't worth the risk. This meant we were left with no choice. We had to get out of Tanzania. Only one decision was left for us to take, and that was which country to make for.

10. Escape to Malawi

We argued over the desirability of Malawi or Kenya until late at night, but could not reach consensus. I decided that Malawi was my choice: the ANC was unbanned in South Africa, I was tired of being in exile, I wanted to go home! Moreover, Malawi had diplomatic relations with South Africa and if we could reach Lilongwe, Malawi's capital, we stood an excellent chance, as South Africans, of being legally repatriated. Those who agreed with me were Callaghan, Makie, Diliza, Nontyatyambo, Nicholas, David, Sipho and the two toddlers of course. Simla, Singa, Jackie, Edward, Valdez, Isaac, Dorcas and a PAC man by the name of Zwai decided to make for Kenya.

The Malawian attitude of friendly helpfulness had been indicated at our meeting with their embassy staff in Dar es Salaam. However because of the newly discovered threat from the growing Mbokodo presence in the city and surrounds, we dared not show our faces in town, certainly not at any government office, so for all we knew the answer to our prayers could be awaiting us at the Malawi Embassy.

Back in the ghetto we studied maps of the Malawi-Tanzania border. Every river, stream and even terrain changes were noted and memorised. I got a fright when consulting the detailed map given to me by a ghetto friend. I had not realised that Kenya was a relative stone's throw from Dar es Salaam compared to Malawi, which was approximately a thousand kilometres distant as the crow flies. (The Kenyan border was a mere two hundred and fifty kilometres.) The route to Kenya, apart from the fact that it was a quarter of the distance to that of Malawi, was attractive because, at least on the map, it appeared to be a straight uncomplicated hike, whereas the Malawian escape route involved circumventing the northern extremity of Lake Malawi before turning south down Malawi's narrow corridor between the lake and the Zambian border. Taking the only alternative

route, we would have to cross the mighty lake by boat from the Tanzanian side or cross the northern Mozambique border and re-enter Malawi at the southern tip of the lake. Our final decision, then, was to prepare for our departure to Malawi via the northern tip of Lake Malawi.

Little clothing would be required during the trip as the climate was mostly tropical and humid. This meant that we could travel light which would help us make fast time as well as enabling us to silently escape in the event of finding ourselves too close to police or army patrols – or to the ordinary rural people we were bound to meet on our journey. After we had established the route to the Malawian and Tanzanian border we tried to pinpoint illicit crossing points that would keep us safe from discovery by the Tanzanian border guards.

Based on the advice and information given to us by a few knowledgeable ghetto folks, our point of entry into Malawi was to be as close as possible to Kaporo, a tiny hamlet situated at the northernmost point of Malawi, which boasted a police post where we could appeal for protection as refugees. Whether or not the local police at Kaporo would accept our illegal presence was in the lap of the gods, but once over the border there would be no other options open to us. Malawi was ruled by the iron hand of Doctor Hastings Banda, backed by a very loyal security system. A stranger in town wouldn't last five minutes undetected by the ubiquitous party informants who came with the schools, churches and every facet of life in the smallest village communities.

Armed with all this knowledge we left Dar es Salaam by bus at four one very hot and humid afternoon. We were buried under a mass of passengers, chickens, goats and what appeared to be tons of luggage jammed into the passenger compartment and piled high on the roof. The weight was pushing the vehicle down onto the wheels with every bump and undulation of the beat-up road and the rear end of the chassis was dragging into the remains of what had once been a tarmac surface. I found comfort in the fact that this crushing, suffocating, swaying morass of humanity provided the perfect safety we needed, hidden as we were from the prying eyes of any security men. This feeling of safety was put to the test on a number of occasions as we were stopped at well-manned roadblocks, whereupon our fellow passengers vented their disgust and anger at the police who were intimidated and waved the bus through.

As the tortured vehicle ground its way through the outer reaches of Dar es Salaam and into the country the road disintegrated into rubble. I wondered how long the vehicle would last, especially the

suspension upon which we were rolling and swaying from side to side like a ship in a force-ten gale. Approaching the mountainous area east of the city, we started the mind-boggling climb through frightening gorges and over hanging cliffs with heavy crosswinds buffeting the already drunken swaying of the bus body to the point of no return. How the luggage on the roof, adding another eight feet to our height, hung on was beyond earthly comprehension. Every lurch and bump caused an intake of breath throughout the crowd as they privately pleaded in silent prayer for deliverance.

Up front, the wizened old Moslem driver appeared to be having the time of his life, enjoying every long second of our discomfort and fear. An emaciated man in his late sixties with matted grey hair topped by a small skull cap, he gave me the impression that he had done nothing more in his entire life than drive heavy vehicles on this long route. He appeared to know each and every pebble personally, and I became convinced that this was so as he seemed to drive us with a nonchalant ease through every dangerous place. He kept this up through the entire day and night, stopping only for nature's call, and if a passenger's needs did not correspond with his, one was in real trouble.

Eventually, some twenty-three hours later, we arrived at the end of the journey totally exhausted, stiff in every muscle, bone and raw shattered nerve-end. The time was 1530 hours and except for a few wattle huts and a wood shack sporting a red and white Coca-Cola sign we could have been in virgin bush. I don't know to this day if this bus terminus had a name. We decided to keep moving in a general north-westerly direction because we knew that that was the way to Malawi.

Aiming to keep away from curious inhabitants, we left the terminus and walked until sundown, which occurs in minutes at eight degrees south of the equator, and as darkness came down like a heavy blanket the air cooled and we fell where we stood, into an all-consuming sleep. The following morning we made our way back to the road and began our long hike. It amazed me to see that our initial group had grown into a long straggling convoy of people including women and children. Somehow they had picked up what we intended to do and had followed us. At first it was worrying but as we continued it occurred to me that the now enlarged group could well act as a sort of cover for us. A large ragged bunch of people of all ages, deliberately exposed for all to see, would certainly be less suspicious than four or five men alone acting in a furtive manner. In any event we couldn't drive them off or drop them in the middle of nowhere.

Soon we came up to a construction site upon which were parked

caravans and a huge amount of construction equipment. The only occupant was a lone security man who waved to us and who I approached to ask if we were on the right road to Malawi. He gave me the impression that he longed for our companionship and would have liked us to stay with him for the rest of the day. He gave us quite detailed directions and without any prompting continued to tell me the best and safest way to circumvent the Tanzanian border patrols and their various posts. We left him to his lonely vigil, having thanked him for his help with a few cigarettes.

Some hours later we got our first glimpse of a river about two or three kilometres ahead and as we got closer we decided to stay on the road and brave it out in the event of meeting guards. I was sure that we would have been noticed by now if guards were there, and any attempt on our part to deviate around the bridge, which had now come into view, could have been a dead giveaway. As was to be expected, TPDF soldiers were in attendance at the bridge but I noticed there was no barrier or roadblock. My colleagues and I melted into the column of people as we covered the last few hundred metres before the bridge, a column of people now acting in a noisy, happy carnival of laughter and fun, with the kids running in and out of us playing catch-me-if-you-can, some waving happily to the soldiers who to my prayerful amazement were smiling back quite amused by this happy-go-lucky throng which kept walking across the bridge, up a very steep hill and over the top onwards Malawi.

The soldiers had made no move to stop us, nor had they made even a courteous inquiry about identification, where we were headed and where we had come from. Trying to remember the maps we had used as reference before our departure from Dar es Salaam, I guessed that we were somewhere near the southern end of the Buhroro Flats, beyond the Southern Highlands. The only town of any substance in this area could only be Mbeya, which if I was reasonably accurate would be some thirty kilometres or more north of us. If all went in our favour over the next twenty-four hours we should sight Lake Malawi on our left, although we would still be in Tanzania.

Now we were moving into the most dangerous part of the trip, because the nearer we got to the border, the more the security movements would intensify. Divine power must have been caring for us as we turned south and made uninterrupted progress towards our goal. Short of discovery by the Tanzanian Security we had only one major obstacle ahead of us, that being a river, the second on our journey. Exactly what kind of river, we had no idea, whether we would strike it lucky a second time and have the luxury of a bridge available to us,

no one knew. The day was closing in on us and I was impatient to reach the final river's banks before sunset. In fact, it was in my mind to actually cross the river before darkness set in, which compelled our small group to break away from the human convoy. We broke into a running march, not quite jogging, in an attempt to reach our objective, but at the same time keeping a wary eye out for trouble.

During this strenuous activity I suddenly remembered that one of the maps we had studied in Dar es Salaam had indicated that all of the rivers in this territory were crocodile infested. This did not occur to me at our first river crossing because we had used a bridge. The crocodile problem grew in my mind when I also remembered that during the bus ride we had experienced a torrential rain storm which had lasted throughout the night and for the most part of the morning, resulting in fast-running flooded rivers. This condition caused great agitation amongst all the creatures inhabiting the river, not least the crocodiles, which apart from snakes and rats were my personal dread. My imagination was working overtime so I called a halt to our fast walk and I explained my fears and the risks to my colleagues who must have been thinking the same thoughts as I, for they agreed readily to my suggestion that we wait until the following morning in order to ford the river in daylight.

An hour or two later we heard the sound of someone approaching from the opposite direction and dived for cover into the surrounding bush. Holding our breath we waited for whoever it was to make an appearance. Five or ten minutes later a youth came into view, quite at ease with the world, strolling to the beat of a song he was singing as he dragged a stick along the dirt road. We stayed low until he had passed us, making certain that he was alone. Having decided it was all clear I quietly whistled, whereupon he stopped absolutely dead in his tracks and slowly turned to face us as we stepped out of our cover signalling that we meant no harm. Although he was frightened, he stood his ground and asked who we were in a gentle friendly manner. In as few words as possible we told him where we had come from and asked him to tell us where we could find the best and safest place to cross the river ahead of us.

Full of curiosity, he asked us where we had alighted from the bus and when we told him he burst out laughing and in a superior school-teacher's tone of voice he proceeded to tell us how stupid we had been. It transpired that we should have left the bus a few kilometres earlier than we had and negotiated with the locals to take us by canoe directly across a route used by smugglers which was very close to Kaporu, a small town which was the capital of the northernmost

region of Malawi. Typical of most rural people, he poured out his tirade of criticism in a self-important way, which was getting on our nerves, but worse still, he was shouting so loud I began to believe that everyone in the entire northern province of Malawi was listening in. He finally seemed to understand our anxious looks and subsided into a lower decibel level telling us that from where we were, no canoe crossing existed but there was a place not too far away, used regularly by smugglers, where we could wade across the river when it was not in flood, if the crocodiles permitted.

Our self-appointed guide took us to a family living on the river's bank where we were made really welcome. While our young guide explained what he knew about us to his family we strolled up to the river's edge and witnessed a seething brown mass of angry water charging at high speed downstream. Realising that we were stuck for a few days at least, we returned to the lonely group of wattle thatched adobe dwellings where the young man introduced us to a very old man and his wife and then proceeded to brief them on our wish to cross the river.

They greeted us kindly and offered us food and drink, which we accepted with enthusiasm. While we ate, the old man's wife told us she was going to get her son, who would be able to show us the best way to cross the river even when it was angry. Without any hesitation she stood and left us. We decided amongst ourselves to pay our hosts with every piece of clothing we didn't need and give them all the Tanzanian money we were carrying. The currency was worthless in Malawi and moreover posed a threat in the event of our being apprehended by unfriendly Malawian security police who could easily identify where we had come from. The mother returned with her son, as promised, and we laid out our spare clothes and money as payment. You could search the world on Christmas day and never find the genuine joy that was demonstrated by these people.

Our first young guide had received his portion of reward and waved us goodbye. The mother introduced her son, who beckoned us to follow him. We picked up our remaining luggage and followed him into the surrounding deep green tropical bush, so thick that it formed a roof over our heads through which the light of the day could hardly penetrate except here and there where it appeared as shafts of gold. The heat was equal to a sauna bath and in minutes we were soaked through by our own sweat. Our sixteen-year-old pathfinder looked over his shoulder every few minutes, making sure we were following, uttering a clucking sound which I assumed meant that he approved of us.

After an hour or so we burst into sudden daylight, a liongrass clearing bordering the river, which, though as brown as molasses and still flowing fast, as far as I was concerned, was certainly not the boiling cauldron we had witnessed earlier. It had broadened to something like a hundred metres in width. Our young leader wasted no time discussing strategy: he hoisted one of our bags onto his head and stepped into the flowing water up to his navel.

Callaghan and a couple of others grabbed their bags and followed the young man into the river. They stumbled a few times but kept going. I held my breath for what seemed to be an eternity, until they waded out of the water onto the opposite bank a few minutes later. They quickly dumped their loads and made the return crossing, but this time, being empty-handed, they started swimming. Suddenly Malawi and freedom seemed a million miles away, for I cannot swim. For a few fleeting seconds, given the choice, I would almost have preferred to face half a dozen Mbokodo security men!

When my colleagues finally heaved themselves up the bank of the river, almost at my feet, they cheerfully told the rest of us to grab our luggage as they had and follow them into the water. Callaghan told me to follow him closely as I moved down into the surging current which instantly played push and pull games with my feet and legs. I gathered myself together as Callaghan encouraged me, but the next moment I stepped into a hole and slipped under the water in total shock and near panic. Callaghan grabbed me and lifted me above the surface, congratulating me for having held on to my luggage. This nightmare continued for another five minutes or so until I realised that my body was moving upwards above the surface, step by step, onto the opposite bank. Relief must have shown clearly on my face, but my comrades made no comment as they turned back to the river and swam across on the final lap to retrieve the last of our luggage. I watched them labouring their way back to me with admiration, at the same time making a silent vow that I would take swimming lessons as soon as I arrived in Johannesburg. We rested for a few minutes and then changed into fresh clothing and made ready to continue our journey. In contrast to my behaviour, the toddlers were delighted that we had to cross the river; they were not worried about the possibility that there might be crocodiles or that the current would be too swift. Sipho carried the one and Diliza the other, and they giggled and gurgled and were so excited that they had to be restrained from trying to squirm out of the arms of their bearers; they saw no danger at all. Their presence in the group was a mixed blessing: we really enjoyed their antics, which served to keep our spirits up, but they were of

course a burden as they had to be carried most of the way and a toddler soon becomes heavy! We took turns carrying them. Most of the way we had limited food, mainly bananas, and they were always fed first.

Our young guide was still with us and seemed to be enjoying himself as he once again signalled us to follow him. Darkness was falling fast as we set out through the thick bush which soon gave way to clearings of farmed land on which we discovered crops of maize, peanuts and sweet potatoes growing abundantly. Soon we saw small houses looming out of the darkness, their small glassless windows framing the flickering, dainty light of burning wooden torches. The young man whispered that we should sit down while he proceeded to the buildings, one of which housed relatives of his. He returned within ten minutes and smilingly told us that his relatives had agreed to let us stay overnight and were preparing a hut for us.

We arrived at the dwelling, thanked our hosts and settled down, having stacked our luggage in one of the corners of the room. My mind was in a turmoil of indecision concerning the need to report our presence to the nearest police or border post officials. The sooner we knew for sure where we stood, the better. If we were caught as illegals, the best we could expect was to be handed over to the Tanzanian security police, which could quite easily be a death sentence. Suddenly, three men, strangers to us, came into the room and without any introductions told us to have a good rest, to be prepared a few hours later to go with them, as they would show us a safe smuggler's trail which would avoid any police contact and get us to Lilongwe. Cautiously I suggested that we would prefer to be told the quickest and best way to get to the nearest border post. Nicholas Dyasop and David Makhubedu agreed with me, but the rest were opposed to the idea. Ignoring the opposition, I was adamant that there was no option but to report as soon as possible to a border-post. One of the three strangers said that if this was our final decision, we should still get some rest while he attended to some personal business, he would return to help us. Every nerve in my being was screaming a warning at me but for the sake of my companions I decided to keep quiet. We didn't have too long to rest!

I must have fallen into a light sleep, for the next thing I was aware of was the presence of a squad of hostile heavily armed men in uniforms, shouting at us to get to our feet immediately. Our Judas was standing aside smirking and well satisfied with himself. We were all shaking with shock and stunned into compliance. As my mind caught up with my body I noticed the soldiers were dressed in heavy

camouflage field combat uniforms. At first I thought they were a marauding Tanzanian security force sent to capture us but thankfully this was not the case. They ordered us to identify our luggage and place it on the floor in front of us. Then in the powerful light of their torches they made a piece-by-piece search of our belongings, leaving nothing untouched. Having satisfied themselves that our luggage contained no weapons, they relaxed.

One of them found a copy of a Soviet publication, *Sputnik Digest*, amongst my belongings. The front cover carried a photo of Mikhail Gorbachev. They grouped together and showed tremendous interest in the magazine cover, now illuminated in the fierce beams of the half dozen torches. When I saw them smiling in admiration at the printed face and mumbling in agreement 'P W Botha', I was flabbergasted, in fact I doubted my hearing, but I did not correct their mistake since they seemed to be very happy about it. Now in a friendlier mood, they asked us to explain our presence in Malawi.

At last I had official confirmation that we were definitely over the border and in the comparative safety of Malawi. As briefly as I could I outlined the circumstances that had brought us to their country, which to my relief they accepted without comment, asking us only to collect our belongings and go with them. At their post, where we arrived an hour later, we were herded into yet another thatched adobe rondavel. Inside was nothing except a dirty floor. The entrance was doorless but within a few minutes they had installed a heavy 12,7 mm machine gun on its tripod, pointing directly at the opening. In spite of the possible danger that this posed I sensed a feeling of relief overwhelming all of us as we realised we were slipping away from the clutches of the ANC. We were now in the hands of Malawian forces, which implied, however vague at this moment, a chance of a bright future.

I reminded the group that we still had a long journey ahead of us and warned them not to become complacent, not just yet. While we stood in the bare room talking quietly amongst ourselves, the leader of the Malawian platoon was in communication with their headquarters by radio. I heard him close down with what I imagined was an 'over and out', whereupon he ordered a few of his men to make another search of our luggage. This time they made a very thorough job of it, shaking each and every piece of clothing, clean and soiled, turning our bags inside out and finally frisking us from our heads to our feet. Whatever we were carrying in our pockets, handkerchiefs, cigarettes and matches, was opened under the glare of their torches. They even re-enacted the *Sputnik* magazine episode, which to my

relief did not awaken their interest or curiosity as to whether the front cover portrait of Gorbachev was P W Botha or not. We appeared to pass muster, for they told us to get some rest.

The time was about 2200 hours as we stretched out on the dirty floor, the first moment in two days that we had the opportunity to fully relax. In a matter of seconds my colleagues were snoring like elephants, much to the amusement of our guards, and before I realised it, I too fell into the black hole of blessed, dreamless sleep. I awakened an hour or two later to the sound of torrential rain roaring on the thatched roof, the noise so great it drowned out all other sounds. No one else seemed to be conscious as I lit a cigarette, using the light of the match to observe the others. The only discomfort I suffered as I lay in the dark was the sudden attack of thousands of mosquitoes which invaded the hut for protection from the wall of water dropping from the sky.

The next thing I knew someone was shaking me and shouting 'wake-up' continuously until I sat up, in shock and surprise, as did my companions as they received the same treatment. As my brain clicked into action I heard the engine of a vehicle and then the slamming of its doors. In a moment of disorientation and near panic I cringed in fear, believing I was back in Quatro, but in seconds the nightmare disintegrated, to be replaced by the torchlit faces of our Malawian guards giving us orders to pick up our baggage and follow them out of the hut and board the army Land Rover.

We were greeted by two men wearing camouflage uniforms under rain capes and armed with AK-47 automatics. Apart from answering my question what time it was – 0230 hours – they ignored us. The journey, on a rough cart-track through jungle-type terrain, lasted somewhere around three and a half hours and only stopped when we reached our destination, the Kaporo police station. We were escorted by our travelling watchdogs into the charge office, the cleanest, most polished place I have ever been in, where we were told by the duty officer to make ourselves comfortable on the surrounding wooden benches. He had no objections to our request to lie down in order to relieve our painfully stiff and aching bodies. I lay there with my head resting upon my bag, fascinated by the calm but rigid discipline being acted out before me. The place was freshly painted, the floor shone with the gleam of a dustless mirror unsullied by a cigarette end or dropped match. After the many charge offices we had involuntarily visited in different African countries over the past decade or two, this pristine police building came as a delightful shock.

Like a schoolboy of days gone by, I raised my hand and requested

permission to visit the toilet. The duty officer smiled and called an escort to direct me to the little room. The hospital-like cleanliness of the charge office was no impressive facade for the benefit of passers-by. The extremely high standard was maintained right down to the toilet seat, plumbing, basins, taps – and, believe it or not, a neat toilet roll, an item I had actually forgotten existed.

Back at the charge office I complimented my escort and the counter officer on the high standard of cleanliness and I scored a very positive and kind retort which also exposed their dignity and pride. At 0700 hours a very smart and well-drilled morning parade took place outside at which the Malawian flag was raised with pomp and ceremony. While watching this through crystal clear windows we were addressed by two smart security officers who, having introduced themselves, ordered David Makhubeda and me to go with them for interrogation.

Even though our hosts had never shown antagonism towards us my heart missed a beat at the utterance of the word 'interrogation'. I then realised how much damage had been inflicted upon my psyche over the years. It was a word which now meant pain, blood, deception and treachery. As we walked down the endless corridor to the room I resolved that I would never allow this fear to grip me again and that no matter how difficult, I would eliminate it from every atom and nerve-end in my body.

The two security men invited us to make ourselves comfortable and then told us that they had decided to question David and me as representatives of our group. They listened avidly to our story and with much expertise cross-questioned anything we said that was unclear to them. The heat of the day was extremely oppressive and as the hours passed on I was overcome with fatigue, finding it difficult to concentrate. Hunger too, was gnawing at me causing an overwhelming need to sleep. One of the men excused himself, left the room and returned a few minutes later with a bunch of bananas which he invited us to eat as they continued with their questions. The interrogation lasted about four to five hours by which time I really was a walking zombie. When the meeting finally closed David had to support my aching body back to the charge office. The interrogation had been conducted in a quiet, civilised manner, a new and wonderful experience for us. Back amongst our colleagues we were bombarded with questions about its results but the only answer we could give them was simply that we didn't know.

Shortly afterwards, we were transported to the nearby Kaporo Prison, an old British colonial prison built of solid stone. It was a for-

bidding and ominous place, filled, I suspected, with ghosts past, victims of another era of tyranny. We were marched into the reception area, ignominiously stripped and searched, told to dress ourselves quickly and then escorted to the cells.

The hours ticked away and I was assailed with doubt one minute and upliftment the next. My relief can be imagined when, after several hours, we were told we were to leave the prison and be taken south to the capital, Lilongwe, immediately. Our belongings were returned to us and we exploded with excitement even though we still had no knowledge of what our future would be.

Two men in plain clothes walked into the reception area and beckoned us to follow them to yet another Land Rover which we happily boarded with a last farewell wave to the prison reception staff. A few minutes later we headed out of Kaporo. The road was tarmac surfaced and in very good condition; in fact it occurred to me that it was the first real modern road I had seen throughout my fifteen years in exile.

Our two guards were pleasant companions but spoke very little. We of course were chirping away among ourselves while enjoying the sheer luxury of a well-sprung vehicle rolling along a smooth highway. The scenery was too beautiful for words and as we approached the mountain area it became breathtaking as we climbed mile after mile until patches of cloud swept around us. Adding to the beauty was a huge lake which had been visible from the start of the climb. The further we travelled the bigger the lake became until it took on the proportions of the sea stretching to the distant southern horizon. The penny dropped and I realised it was Lake Malawi.

We eventually reached the summit of the mountain range and slowly began our descent. Every corner we turned exposed even more beauty, for we were running parallel to a magnificent white water river in full spate, the deluge of foaming spray causing our driver to switch on the windscreen wipers for quite a few kilometres. We stopped for the night at the Mzuzu Police Station, where the duty officer greeted us with the unexpected news that he had organised hot food for us at a local restaurant! After a very tasty meal he escorted us into the traffic department offices where we were invited to make ourselves comfortable for the night. We literally threw ourselves on the concrete floor and passed out instantly.

An hour or two later I awakened feeling cold and experiencing cramps. I stood up very slowly massaging my legs, and moving around like a very old man. The night was far from over, but I decided that I wasn't going to sleep on that hard and cold floor again. Using one of

my bags as a cushion I sat down with my back against the wall and catnapped through the remainder of the night to the sound of steadily falling rain. We awakened to daylight and the sounds of voices and movement as the staff arrived to resume their duties for the day. The duty officer who we had met the night before was about to leave but he kindly advised us that the restaurant which had prepared and delivered our first meal was open for us to get a breakfast and that all we needed to do was to sign the bill which would be sent to the police station for payment. It was a good feeling to be back enjoying a civilised lifestyle where everyone seemed to be smilingly pleasant.

An hour or two later the security officials at the police station took me to yet another debriefing session where I repeated my story for the umpteenth time. The interrogator seemed to find everything I had told him satisfactory and concluded the meeting with the comment that our story had been corroborated by the Malawian Embassy in Dar es Salaam. My colleagues and I were then fingerprinted and photographed before being transported to Mzuzu prison with a group of women and children. On arrival they were taken to the women's section and we to the male wing where we were lodged in one of two cells. The warmth in attitude which we had experienced at the police station had been replaced by the prison wardens with one of cool indifference, though they did not bully us or make any threatening gestures.

Our cell was clean but bare of furniture of any kind. The window opening in the wall had neither glass nor a mesh to protect us from bloodthirsty mosquitoes, wind or heavy rain. In the centre of the floor sticking out of the concrete was a peculiar half-moon shaped metal contraption. It stood about six inches above the floor and, having tripped over it a dozen times in the first hour, we became very conscious of its presence. One of the wardens explained that these were old punishment cells and the mysterious device was used in colonial times on 'bad-boy' prisoners who were made to squat on the floor with hands handcuffed behind their backs and attached to the half-moon shaped metal bar. We were told with great gusto that recipients of the punishment were always stripped naked and left squatting for whatever period the authorities deemed right and proper. At irregular intervals the handcuffed one was treated to a bucket of cold water thrown over him. To add insult to injury the inmate's food rations were drastically reduced during this period of torture.

With great peals of laughter our warden informant left us for a few minutes, returning with a pile of blankets which, when sorted out, resulted in each of us receiving two. In the corner was a night bucket

which needed no explanation. The night temperatures were relatively cold in this area of Malawi so the blankets were very welcome. At 0600 hours we were awakened to the sound of heavy metal keys banging against our cell door and we were given our first Malawian prison breakfast, a soft maize porridge. The food served in this prison was basically African with the exception that at no time did we receive any meat. Lunch was always *nsima* (maize *phuto*) with beans or spinach. Supper was always a repeat of the days' lunch. One day we received ripe bananas, an absolute luxury. The normal prisoner population was made to work every day, Monday through to Saturday, in prison vegetable and maize fields which made the prison self sufficient as far as its food needs were concerned.

We met and talked with a wide spectrum of the inmates and discovered that there were many Malawians in detention for ludicrous political offences against the state. Some were arrested for drinking on Heroes' day, others were being persecuted for religious beliefs. One twelve-year-old boy, wearing his school uniform, was brought in during the week, arrested for the most ridiculous reason. His mother had sent him to the local store to pick up a few odd groceries. At the check-out he passed the money to the cashier and in so doing dropped a coin which rolled towards some shelves. He had turned and stamped his foot on the coin to stop it rolling. Unfortunately a security man witnessed the episode and immediately arrested the young schoolboy for showing disrespect against the life president of Malawi by putting his 'dirty foot' on the embossed head!

A week after our internment in Mzuzu prison we were becoming apprehensive and morale was slowly ebbing away. Apart from the lack of communication from any source there was no medical facility. Just as the memories of false promises and the treachery of the past started returning to haunt us, we were shunted out of the cells and transported to a police station where we were met by South African embassy officials representing the South African Home Affairs Department.

They were a pleasant group but perfect bureaucrats who listened to our story in a cold and detached, unemotional way. At the conclusion, they requested any and all documentation (which few of the group could provide as a result of loss or destruction during our long journey). They showed no antagonism or mistrust but proceeded to take our finger prints and 'mug-shots'. We were also asked to supply information in respect of our next-of-kin and other relatives and last known addresses. We were assured there was nothing sinister in this because the information was vital help to them to prove our South

African origins. Following this we were given a form requesting repatriation and an application for travel documents. The meeting was closed and the bureaucrats filed out.

A few days later we were visited by the deputy to the South African Ambassador who informed us that we had been cleared and identified as South Africans and would henceforth be under the care and protection of the South African Embassy. Our relief and joy was complete as he turned to the Malawian officials and requested that we be booked into a hotel or guest house for the duration of our stay in Malawi. They in turn politely refused the request, saying that they had strong evidence that ANC Mbokodo and Tanzanian Intelligence were searching for us and it would be better for everyone if we were held in safe custody. It was an intelligent suggestion to which we gratefully agreed. The South African spokesman insisted that we should be provided with mattresses and meals prepared by an outside hotel or restaurant and served to us in jail, which was again countered by the Malawians who promised to provide special meals, also for security reasons, and extra blankets. The result of the entire episode was that we remained in jail with the promised comforts and the certainty of soon-to-be return to our beloved country.

For the first time in fifteen years, my heart and mind were at rest most of the days and nights spent in the Mzuzu jail. Sudden movement and noises still made me react nervously but after all those years of violent experiences, to others and myself, I realised that it would take time before I could completely eliminate the nightmare of the past. I started to concentrate on images of my wife, child and Winston, my close, close brother and other loved ones. Over a decade had passed since I had last seen them: I wondered if I would be able to pick up life from where I had left off. My vision had always been to return to South Africa as a warrior, to fight for the freedom of the oppressed, to eliminate apartheid and, what I perceived all good soldiers have to do as their duty, to fear nothing in pursuit of that freedom.

Now I started thinking about the conditions in South Africa. How different would it be? I had heard from various sources that F W de Klerk had made dramatic news, especially with the release of Nelson Mandela and the lifting of many of the apartheid laws. It all sounded exciting but I maintained a cautious attitude in the midst of the joyful euphoria being expressed by some of my colleagues.

A week before our eventual repatriation, we were visited by two senior South African security police who conducted preliminary investigations of each of us. Their attitude was businesslike, but not un-

friendly, and the face to face meetings passed without drama. They informed us that they were mandated to check and facilitate the repatriation of all South Africans in Malawian prisons and refugee centres. An hour or two later they departed leaving us with the distinct impression that soon we would follow them back to our land, our home and our kinfolk. An air of excited anticipation now flowed through me, replacing the gut pain of apprehension which had resided in me for what seemed to have been an eternity. In fact I couldn't remember when last I had experienced such a good feeling, or been so relaxed. It would be a few days before we were finally on our way and I used the time to meditate on the long journey I had travelled over the past fifteen years.

Compared to other 'institutions' I had involuntarily visited, the administration and daily running of the Malawian prison and local police departments was a relatively pleasant experience. One could see that everything was run efficiently without corruption and bribery rearing their ugly heads. This was most assuredly the exception to the rule amongst all the independent African states, where the disease of corruption goes hand in hand with political power seekers, black and white. It's so tragic that the average man and woman in the street (or the bush) has forgotten, or never understood, that the true job of the politician is to represent their interests, their quality of life, and their future aspirations, to name but three.

Alas, it isn't so, for political animals see only the opportunity through power for self advancement and self indulgence at the cost of the lives and future of their constituents. That is exactly why I had come to grief with the ANC/SACP elite. My reward for speaking out against their methods of leadership and obviously corrupt actions had been to be labelled a dissident.

The days passed by and we were left alone in our police cells, the only interruption being the three monotonous meals of *nsima* laced with overripe bananas. Then came our big day when we were taken from our cell and escorted to the police Land Rover ready for our journey to Lilongwe. Some hours later the vehicle came to a stop outside the Mawula prison in Lilongwe, our new and hopefully last stop before going home to South Africa.

Although we were treated well at Mawula, the local prisoners were subjected to despicable conditions and treatment reminiscent of our Angolan experiences. We discovered that many were being held for their religious convictions (the majority, it seemed, were Christians). Together with common criminals, political dissidents and others, they were all in bad shape; many were on the point of death and

others were dying where they stood or lay asleep. Unlike Mzuzu Prison, the inmates were not provided with blankets unless they were convicted criminals. I was sickened by what I saw, especially the suffering and indignity perpetrated against the detainees held on grounds of religious or political differences with the state. These detainees were invariably in a semi-naked state and whatever clothes they wore were really nothing more than filthy rags. They slept on the cold concrete floors, usually in a sitting position as there was not enough space to lie down. The only light relief they experienced was when they were allowed into the exercise yard. They were a pitiful sight with hanging heads on bony shoulders shuffling around the yard in total despair. No medical treatment was afforded them, although it was a fact that the Malawian security police were responsible for their welfare. How many of those people survived their ordeal, I have no way of knowing, for a few days later our group left for the airport. We were escorted to Kamuzu Banda Airport in a Malawian security police vehicle. Our documentation showed that we were leaving Malawi under a deportation order and not, as we had imagined, an exercise of repatriation, but this was actually to our advantage because we could not be held liable for travelling costs. The reality of the moment of walking across the terminal area with various escorts did not hit me, in fact I was numb, until I suddenly saw the orange tail of our South African Airways Boeing 737 standing there in the sunlight with the boarding steps rising up to the opened back door. My heart was pounding, my knees were weak and my emotions were totally mixed up. I had a lump in my throat and I wanted to laugh and cry simultaneously.

Our retinue of security men bade us farewell and we climbed the stairs, at the top of which we were greeted and welcomed aboard by a very pleasant SAA steward who directed us to our seats. I sat myself down, fixed my seat belt and immediately fell asleep. About forty-five minutes later I was awakened, totally disorientated, to be greeted with the sight of a tray being placed on the fold-down table in front of me. No mealie samp in an upturned 'dustbin lid' but breakfast with an egg, bacon and a lamb chop! Dainty bread rolls, butter, jam plus tea in a cup! Most wonderful of all, a knife, fork and spoon, admittedly plastic, but what luxury! I knew then that I had returned to the civilised world and whilst there were obstacles ahead I felt the glow of confidence and hope flow through me.

Afrikaans has never been my favourite language, but when the voice of the pilot came over the intercom advising us of speed, height and location in calm, gentle and self assured tones, it touched off a

sentimental surge in my heart that confirmed I was on my way home!
It was music to my ears! It was a great feeling!

11. Back on South African soil

An hour later the aircraft started its descent and I was riveted to the window as we flew over Pretoria on the flight path to Jan Smuts Airport. Suddenly we were on the runway, slowing to the roar of the reverse thrust of the engines, until we rolled to a halt outside the main building of the airport. It was a thrilling moment which was disturbed only by the arrival of one of the crew who leaned over us and quietly asked us to remain in our seats until the aircraft was emptied of all the other 'normal' passengers.

Almost seconds after the last of our fellow travellers had disembarked, we were joined by four stern-faced South African security policemen, the senior one beckoning us to follow them out of the Boeing. Collecting our cabin bags, we did as we were asked and followed them into the airport security area. Although these uniformed men represented 'the enemy' to us, there was no shoving, pushing or yelling of obscenities at us, very different treatment to the brutality handed out by our 'friends' in the Mbokodo or 'allies' left behind in Mozambique, Tanzania and Angola. On the contrary, the South Africans treated us in a formal and respectful manner as they asked us for our documents and searched the little baggage in our possession. We enjoyed a mug or two of tea with biscuits while they completed the formalities, after which we were escorted to a convoy of six official police cars and separated into pairs for each vehicle. A police driver and security officer joined each car for the long journey to Kimberley.

After fifteen years' absence, the changes that had taken place in South Africa were mind-boggling. Immediately we had extricated ourselves from the tangle of roads and flyovers at Jan Smuts Airport the dual carriage highways were awesome, as was the skyline of Johannesburg. Everything I saw exuded wealth. Black men

everywhere in crash helmets and seemingly well dressed, mounted on bright coloured motorbikes with large boxes in place of a pillion. Huge heavy trucks driven by black men in their hundreds. Expensive luxury cars flying along the highway in their droves at frightening speeds. The dozens of brightly coloured filling stations looked like fun parks with their satellite takeaway food parlours offering every type of delicious food known to man. And we had been told day after day that international sanctions had reduced the Republic to poverty and decay!

Another feature that surfaced in my first hours back in the Republic was the change in attitude of our police guards. The old arrogance and hostility had gone. The men we shared the car with were polite; they treated us exactly the same as I would imagine decent policemen do in Britain and America.

After many hours we arrived at the Kimberley police station where we waited while the internal security staff prepared to make official our return to South Africa under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act. This meant detailed interrogation under detention. Once the necessary documentation had been completed we left Kimberley by road for Barkly West where we were held at the local police station. We were each provided with a proper bed, mattress and more than sufficient blankets, all spotlessly clean. Our first supper immediately after our arrival at Barkly West consisted of fresh brown bread and butter, boerewors and coffee, which for us was luxury!

Early the following morning we were visited by two policeman who asked us if we had any complaints. I had not heard that question for nearly two decades – but even more startling was the fact that our answer was no. The next minute we were supplied with toiletries and, if you please, a towel and taken to the shower room where there was an abundance of hot water. I couldn't remember when last I had had a hot shower, but believe me, it would be a long, long time before I'd forget this one!

Back in Kimberley, we underwent a thorough medical check-up conducted by a Doctor Els, the district surgeon. We requested an HIV check-up, which was granted subject to our signing a document confirming that we had made the request. Then we were subjected to a dental inspection. On completion of this we were taken before an elderly magistrate one by one to be questioned regarding the treatment we had received so far. I grinned when he questioned me and he asked me what caused me to do this. I told him that if his question had been directed to me any time in exile, it would be a book worth writing. He laughed and prophetically said: 'Well, write one!'

Next we faced the really serious business of interrogation by men from the South African Police Headquarters in Pretoria. Leading them were two captains, one named Van der Merwe and the other Van der Bergh. They briefed us, spelling out the principles of interrogation and our rights regarding answering questions posed by their team. We were told that no one would be coerced to answer any question and if we did not wish to answer we were free not to reply. I thought cynically to myself, here we go, all the hocus-pocus, carrot and stick tactics of security methods. What followed shook me. These security men already knew everything, down to small insignificant details, about my fifteen years in exile, almost on a day to day basis. Actually there wasn't any interrogation in the real sense; they told me my story and looked to me for confirmation. Apparently in 1984, after I had been shot, they had received information that I was dead, but they had subsequently rectified my status.

It was mind boggling to listen to their exposition. They knew more about me than I did and their awareness of events that had, and still were, taking place within the inner sanctums of the ANC hierarchy was very impressive. Their knowledge of what was happening in Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Britain, Russia, East Germany – in fact every country on earth – was astounding, so much so that there was nothing, but nothing, I could tell them. Quite a few times the police officer would grin at my astonishment when he mentioned a specific experience I had undergone, on a given day, at a certain hour: something that I had never shared with a living soul.

I suspect that the rumour that I had been killed at the Plot came from Chris More, the man I had first met at Membesh and who had later been at The Plot with me. Chris had taken part in the mutiny and had been rounded up and taken to Graffanil army base together with me and the other ringleaders. He had also been present when I was shot and he probably thought I would not survive my injuries. After these events Chris Hani had approached him and said: 'I was about to infiltrate you into South Africa and now you have gone and joined these people.' Later in 1984 Chris had been sent to Mozambique and transferred to Swaziland, where he was sent to an ANC safe house. He was arrested by the Swazi police and detained in a prison in Mbabane together with some fifty other MK cadres. One day two white South African police officers arrived to sift through the cells and selected four MK men, Chris being one of them. The next day these four had their hands and feet manacled by the Swazi police, they were loaded into a closed Land Rover and driven to the Oshoek

border post to be handed over to the SAP. The SAP, however, were embarrassed to be seen accepting manacled prisoners at a civilian border post and Chris and the others were then driven to a Swazi police station near the South African town of Piet Retief where they were locked up for the night. The next day they were driven to a place on the border where they were passed one by one to the SAP over the border fence. They were then taken to Piet Retief police station where they were locked up and allowed to 'cool off' for two weeks. Apparently the SAP feared an international outcry: there was little doubt that the remaining MK prisoners in Mbabane prison would alert the ANC as to what had happened, and it was anticipated that they would get countries sympathetic to their cause to exert diplomatic pressure on South Africa. But nothing happened, and when the police interrogation started, Chris and the other three prisoners were taunted with: 'Even your own organisation does not care about you; we could kill you with impunity.' The morale of the MK cadres was already low and it was further eroded by the police who knew far more about the operations of the ANC in exile than they did themselves. The police convinced them that they were omnipotent: they were able to tell them exactly where, when and how they had spent their time in exile, so that there was no point in denying anything. After all, the communication in the MK was poor: a cadre really only knew what was going on in his own camp; he did not know what was going on in other camps except by word of mouth news which was conveyed primarily by the truck drivers who brought supplies to the camps. It was frequently difficult to separate fact from fiction. Cadres were severely punished if they were caught listening to a South African radio station, so our main source of news was the BBC World Service, which carried only limited news about South Africa, and Radio Freedom, which many of us did not trust. I was told that Chris was turned into an askari and became one of the first black paratroopers to be trained in South Africa, but was forced to retire from the SAP in 1993, as were all askaris.

I can imagine how easily those MK cadres were manipulated: imagine one's surprise and confusion when, in the middle of a sentence, one's interrogator would stop and then tell you: 'For example, Pepe, that Cuban lieutenant in Novo Catengue, did not like you to use their toilet,' or 'but Pepe liked that girl Maki and used to give her chocolate, Havana Club rum, and yes – bubble-gum'. It wasn't long before I started to believe that the SAP had not only infiltrated the ANC but actually owned it!

During our detention my family had decided to seek assistance

from the Legal Resources Centre in the hope that they could establish my whereabouts and determine my state of health. They were also concerned about my legal status and had many questions about whether or not I was to be charged and if so, what were the charges. I was not aware that Walter Sisulu had received a letter we had written when we were in Tanzania, a letter that explained our plight within the ANC organisation. His response had been to denounce us in a statement saying that we were nothing more than agents for the South African government. This was something else that my family wanted to clarify for their own safety. Being labelled a 'government agent' was tantamount to a death sentence in the townships.

The police satisfied themselves that we had no charges pending against us except for leaving the country illegally and getting military training with the express purpose and intention of toppling the South African regime. During our detention we kept up to date with the news and specifically with the talks taking place between the government and the ANC. Certain agreements had been made about the status of political prisoners so it came as no surprise when we were released having been detained for just short of a month.

After our interrogation had been completed we were driven in a convoy of three cars to Pretoria, where we arrived in the late afternoon. This time we had no guards accompanying us and at stops we swapped our positions in the cars. All of us were wondering: 'What happens next?' It was a strange experience for me: I had spent fifteen years being told what to do; during the escape we had had a firm goal to achieve ... soon I would be free – to do what? I think the others felt much the same way as I did. From time to time someone would comment on the scenery or something else that caught our attention, but then we would lapse into silence, lost in thought.

Finally the magic moment arrived and we were free, with mixed feelings of elation and uncertainty. We had limited funds and were overwhelmed by our situation. The police assisted us by phoning various church groups who might help us, and Bishop Malemb of Soshanguve came to our rescue, taking us to his home and treating us like royalty. I shall always remember his generosity and the prayers that he offered to thank the Almighty for our safe return. The first thing we requested from him was to set up a press conference for us to go public for the first time and set the record straight. We felt this was a most urgent need in the light of the deliberate lies and misinformation being spread by the ANC in the persons of Walter Sisulu and Jacob Zuma. Our first press conference, on 15 May 1990, certainly drew the press corps, many of whom attended with objective and

open minds, while others were openly hostile and biased. To limit the damage of our disclosures, the ANC predictably employed smear tactics, accusing us of being askaris, turned by the SAP into assassins and spies working for the state. For better or for worse, our story started its journey out to the man in the street around the world.

The day after our arrival Bishop Malemb feasted us with traditional South African braai: the fatted claf was literally roasted on a spit. This was the last meeting of our exclusive club of escapees. After lunch Diliza, Nontyatyambo and her little girl left for Dube, Soweto, with Diliza's mother and brother and sister, who had come to fetch them. Callaghan, Makie and her son left for the Cape with Callaghan's mother and brother. The Bishop had had a difficult time locating our relatives: over the years some families had moved, telephone numbers had changed, and some families – mine, for example – did not have a phone. Often he had to contact fraternal ministers in the vicinity of the last known address and rely on their good services to track relatives. It took two days to make contact with David Makhubedu's sister, who came to take him back to Meadowlands in Soweto. After three days the bishop had not been able to contact my family, so he drove me and Nicholas Dyasop to Evaton. When I arrived at the family home there was great jubilation, laughter and tears as I saw my dear mother walking towards me with her arms held out in greeting.

Oh! What a moment of utter joy and relief. The bishop let us enjoy our magic moment and then called the excited crowd of neighbours and ourselves to be quiet whilst he offered an impromptu prayer of thanks to the Almighty for having delivered me back to the bosom of my family. For the first time in my life I saw my big strong mother weeping, something I had always believed she was incapable of doing, but my heart was bursting with love for her tears of joy. She was in her late eighties at this time and later I was told by Winston, my beloved brother, that during the past fifteen years she had tenaciously kept her faith intact even when the security police informed her that I had been fatally shot while in exile. Nicholas stayed with us for a week and then he met up with Sipho Phungulwa, who had been staying at Zola, and they left for the Cape.

During my long absence the family fortunes had suffered serious setbacks. The family business had collapsed, my brother and sisters had lost their jobs and work could not be found anywhere. They had undergone constant harassment by the security police by way of midnight to early morning searches. Previously friendly relatives had kept their distance because of fear of becoming contaminated politi-

cally. However, adversity actually served to weld my family together and thereby strengthen their dignity even when oppressed by poverty, which made me very proud.

They all wanted to know what had happened to me in exile; did I think that it had been worth while? We sat up into the late hours night after night while I related my experiences, and discussed the history of the ANC from its inception through four decades. Oh how I missed my father's presence and his wisdom. He would have enjoyed the discussions and I know for a fact that he would have spat blood rather than accept the communist influences devouring the high principles of the original Luthuli ANC. As the family listened to my adventures they began to see that there were similarities beginning to manifest themselves in the townships. Intolerance, anti-democratic and totalitarian political structures supported by intimidation, violence and necklacing had become an everyday occurrence, almost the norm. In fact, it was not long before I was told that I had 'forfeited my right to live in the townships', following a 'comrades' meeting' in Evaton. The 'comrades' proudly told the *Weekly Mail* (8-14 June 1990), 'we ordered the family he was visiting to kick him out immediately'. I was driven from my own home.

Although my close comrades and I (returned exiles) had not yet formed a recognisable unified entity, the media was taking notice of our revelations about the ANC camps and the activities of the communist elements within the ANC executive. The exposure of the facts was beginning to embarrass leading personalities in the ANC who, asked to respond to our accusations, fobbed off every question by calling us fools, trouble makers and outrageous liars. In spite of their rebuttal of our announcements it became necessary for them to call a meeting with us in an attempt to stop us exposing the truth any further.

The meeting was held in Soweto with two senior ANC representatives, Tokyo Sexwale, PWV ANC Chairman and member of the National Executive Committee, and Wilton Mkwayi, a senior member of the ANC and fellow prisoner with Nelson Mandela. We agreed that neither party would issue inflammatory statements independent of the other and that we would discuss (in private) all issues before an independent, impartial committee which would arbitrate and finally adjudicate the 'worthiness' of the subject matter. Walter Sisulu, deputy president of the ANC, signed his approval of the document.

It didn't take long for the ANC to break our accord (which we fully expected would happen), whereupon we heated-up our campaign with a vengeance. The pressure mounted until the stories were daily

news and people of all races were thinking aloud that where there's smoke, there must be fire. The fire was being fanned by powerful people in South Africa and overseas; the international media was getting excited and the heat was getting to the ANC leaders, so much so that Nelson Mandela capitulated and officially conceded that atrocities, tortures and cruel murders had indeed been committed. At the same time he attempted to soften the admission of guilt by pronouncing that all detainees in the camps over the South African border had been released. However, a year later, in August 1991, the ANC had the gall to announce that they were going to release a further thirty-two detainees held for the crime of having been spies.

In spite of Mandela's 1990 statement that the MK or Mbokodo perpetrators of the killings and torture had been rounded up and severely punished by an internal ANC Commission, no evidence of this was ever found. We were pleased when Amnesty International released a report in 1992 showing that they were beginning to take a serious interest in the antics of the ANC.

In June 1990 Nicholas Dyasop and Sipho Phungulwa visited the Transkei together to spend a few days with Nicholas's sister in Umtata. While they were there they attended a previously arranged meeting with the Transkei ANC leadership. They arrived with time to spare, to be greeted by an official who appeared to be in charge of the offices. Sipho whispered to Nicholas that he recognised the man as having been one of his students at a firearms and assassination techniques course in Lesotho some years earlier. As they waited for the party leaders to arrive a couple of strangers came into the office. They appeared to be studying Sipho and Nicholas, making them feel uncomfortable and apprehensive.

At about 1500 hours, after a two-hour wait, Sipho and Nicholas told the man in charge that they had better things to do than wait for tardy ANC officials and that they would be leaving. They were told to wait a while as it was certain that the leaders would arrive at the latest at 1800 hours. My two comrades decided that enough was enough and left the premises. Outside they took a taxi which appeared to be closely followed by a Peugeot containing two men. When they arrived at their destination they paid the taxi driver, got out of the vehicle, and were immediately accosted by the two men in the Peugeot, both armed with Scorpion machine pistols, who without hesitation opened fire. Sipho was instantly cut down and killed in the hail of bullets but Nicholas, running for his life, ducking and diving like a puppet, managed to escape unharmed. He reported the incident to the Transkei Police who took a statement.

A year later he was summoned to an identification parade where he identified the two men. They were the same two who had appeared to study him and Sipho whilst they sat waiting in the ANC offices. The two assassins were arrested immediately after the identification was completed. They appeared in court, only to be released on a nominal bail, and were never brought to trial! The truth of the matter was that Transkei had degenerated into the same situation as Angola, Zambia and Tanzania, where the governments supported and were accomplices in torture and the murder of ANC dissidents.

A month after Sipho Phungulwa's murder, Nelson Mandela was confronted with full documentation of it, together with a demand for a ANC inquiry. It fell on deaf ears. When these issues were again raised, before journalists in London, on 4 July 1990, during his world tour, Mandela 'brushed aside' the questions in a 'steely' manner, according to the front page report of the *Guardian*. 'I have never known a dead man to be able to identify the person who killed him', he cynically commented.

After Sipho's assassination, Nicholas Dyasop, Robert Shange (Callaghan), David Makhubedu and I met to discuss how best to protect ourselves against the Mbokodo. We felt very exposed; our comrades were scattered all over South Africa, which made us easy targets. We decided to form the Returned Exiles Coordinating Committee (RECOC), which would have as one of its objectives the publicising of any assassinations of our members. We also made contact with overseas human rights groups such as Amnesty International and the International Society for Human Rights. RECOC is an informal organisation. I was elected chairman and Nicholas secretary. Another aim of RECOC was to assist former victims of the Mbokodo. Many of our people were unemployable, with only military training, which is not a very saleable service, and limited education. The organisation would, we hoped, become a force to be reckoned with and provide aggrieved individuals with a powerful base to speak from.

In September 1991 ANC President Nelson Mandela announced the appointment of a tribunal to investigate allegations of abuses committed by ANC officials against their prisoners in exile. I refused to cooperate with the commission, because despite the stated willingness of politically impartial human rights bodies to establish a genuinely independent commission, the ANC appointed advocate Louis Skweyiya, an ANC member and brother of Zola Skweyiya (who was implicated in the Mbokodo scandal), as chairman. The second member of the tribunal was Bridget Mabandla, also an ANC

member, and the third was advocate Gilbert Marcus. Many other victims of the Mbokodo felt as I did and others were intimidated into not giving evidence. Ultimately, some seventeen people testified, together with some senior ANC officials.

The terms of reference of the commission were very restrictive: only complaints by actual victims could be made, so relatives of people killed could make no representation. The reasons for their imprisonment, torture or execution were not investigated, and this was an important omission, because in the highly charged atmosphere of the townships, being branded an 'enemy agent' was tantamount to a death sentence. It was important therefore that victims' names be cleared. In its findings, the Commission noted that:

A striking feature of the evidence presented to the Commission was its consistency. The experience of the former detainees was depressingly similar, varying only in degree of severity. The witnesses who testified included persons loyal to the ANC and those who were hostile to the ANC. It included persons convicted of crimes and those never charged. The periods of detention and the alleged reasons therefore varied markedly. Yet, the same practices and names cropped up over and over again. We rule out the possibility of collusion or fabrication.

The Commission recommended that those detained without charge by the ANC should have the allegations against them withdrawn and should receive an unequivocal apology. The ANC should provide financial compensation, medical and psychological care and educational assistance to those who had suffered abuse. They also recommended 'the creation of an independent structure which is perceived to be impartial and which is capable of documenting cases of abuse' in order to investigate the many individual cases which were not submitted to the commission and proposed that this same independent structure should be responsible for investigating allegations of 'disappearance' or killing.

The commissioners submitted to Nelson Mandela a confidential list of members of the security department alleged to be responsible for ill-treatment of detainees. However, the report notes:

It would be wrong, in our view, to limit responsibility to such persons. There are clearly persons in the senior ranks of the security department who were responsible for the situation in the camps and who should not escape the net of accountability. We consider this recommendation to be of the greatest importance, particularly in the light of the role that the ANC is likely to play in a future gov-

ernment. No person who is guilty of committing atrocities should ever again be allowed to assume a position of power. Unless the ANC is prepared to take decisive action, the risk of repetition will forever be present. The best formula for prevention is to ensure that the perpetrators of brutality are brought to account and seen to be brought to account.

Mr Mandela received the Skweyiya Commission's recommendations in August 1992 and said they would be considered as a matter of urgency. Two months later he released them but withheld the names of those ANC officials who had been implicated, and after a further five months he appointed a second ANC tribunal, under the chairmanship of businessman Sam Motsuenyane.

In January 1993, Advocate Robert S Douglas SC presented the Douglas Commission Report on ANC Detention Centres, at the behest of the US-based International Freedom Foundation. I had assisted the commission to locate witnesses, and Advocate Douglas travelled around the country taking sworn statements from former ANC detainees, relatives of victims and others who were able to contribute to an understanding of the atrocities that had occurred in the camps. In my opinion his report is the most comprehensive that has been produced, but the ANC branded it 'propagandistic' and others as 'commie bashing'. Many of the people I located had been intimidated and refused to give evidence (I myself received death threats), and one could not blame them, as during 1992 several ex-detainees went into hiding, had their homes destroyed or were threatened. Bongani Mtshangase, a member of Patrick Hlongwane's Returned Exiles Committee, was shot dead by an unidentified gunman on 21 March 1992 in Msinga, Natal.

In May, the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) released its report, 'Human Rights and the African National Congress', which was critical of the role played by the UNHCR and by African host countries which permitted the ANC to act as a government in exile, abdicating their own law enforcement and judicial authority over the ANC and colluding with it in the suppression of human rights.

Then, in August 1993, came the publication of the Motsuenyane Commission's report. I had had serious misgivings about giving evidence to the Motsuenyane Commission, because I regarded it as another ANC propaganda exercise, but nonetheless it was an improvement on the Skweyiya Commission. Only the chairman, Sam Motsuenyane, was an ANC member; the other two members of the tribunal were David Zamchiya, a Zimbabwean lawyer, and Margaret

Burnham, an American attorney sympathetic to the ANC. Some senior ANC members who had been implicated were compelled to attend (Ronnie Kasrils attended voluntarily to 'clear his name'), and hearings were open to the press.

On the appointed day I arrived at the conference rooms at the FNB stadium and happened to bump into Mzwai Piliso, who was also to give evidence that day, in the lift. We greeted each other, after which there was a stony silence. The hearings were conducted in the manner of court proceedings: Motsuenyane was the 'judge', assisted by his two 'assessors' Zamchiya and Burnham. The ANC had appointed a senior, high-powered legal defence team to represent the implicated ANC officials and selected a young, inexperienced 'prosecution' team to represent the victims: I found them more of a hindrance than a help. The 'accused' were heard before the 'victims' and this led to the absurd dismissal from the witness stand of Jacob Zuma, who rightly pointed out that he could not answer charges that had not yet been made against him. When Mzwai Piliso took the witness stand he grumbled that he had been coerced into attending the hearing and that he was being victimised for having done his duty by people such as me. He asked that I be removed from the 'court', which I was.

When my turn came to give evidence I presented it as factually as possible; I criticised the behaviour of the ANC in general, but did not name any villains. There was very little cross-examination and the 'defence' team merely acted as apologists for the ANC, saying that it had been under pressure, going through a difficult time, etc. During my evidence a number of Mbokodo entered the 'court', including Sizwe Mkhonto. I do not know whether they were there to try to intimidate me. The 'judge' and his 'assessors' had little to say and I learnt from other witnesses that only Ms Burnham had asked probing questions: it was felt that Motsuenyane and Zamchiya had pulled their punches. Pallo Jordan, the ANC information chief, who was himself detained by the Mbokodo for a short while, confirmed that 'the political culture nurtured by the SACP's leadership over the years has produced a spirit of intolerance, petty intellectual thuggery and political dissembling among its membership', but argued that the Mbokodo's actions had been necessary to hold the ANC together at that time.

After I had given my evidence Jacob Zuma came up to me and said that we should 'bury the hatchet'. He and Kader Asmal, the ANC's human rights expert, asked for my telephone number (but never phoned me). Ms Burnham offered to give me a lift into town. She appeared shocked at the evidence she had heard and said that she did

not know how we had survived. She appeared to be genuinely sympathetic and later expressed disappointment at the ANC's failure to act upon the commission's recommendations, which were:

- The ANC publicly apologise to all in exile whose rights were violated;
- All detained persons be compensated by the organisation;
- A claims settlement agency be created to award such compensation, especially to those who were detained without trial, were beaten, humiliated, placed in solitary confinement, to families of those who lost their lives, and were subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment;
- The organisation periodically publish a bulletin of those still missing and the state of investigations into their absence;
- Officials implicated in the abuses face disciplinary action in terms of the organisation's code of conduct;
- The ANC consider paying the medical bills of those seriously affected by abuses;
- The organisation reconciles with and reintegrates into its ranks all its victims willing to work again with it;
- Supervision of all ANC organs by the national executive committee be improved to increase accountability and avoid the recurrence of such incidents.

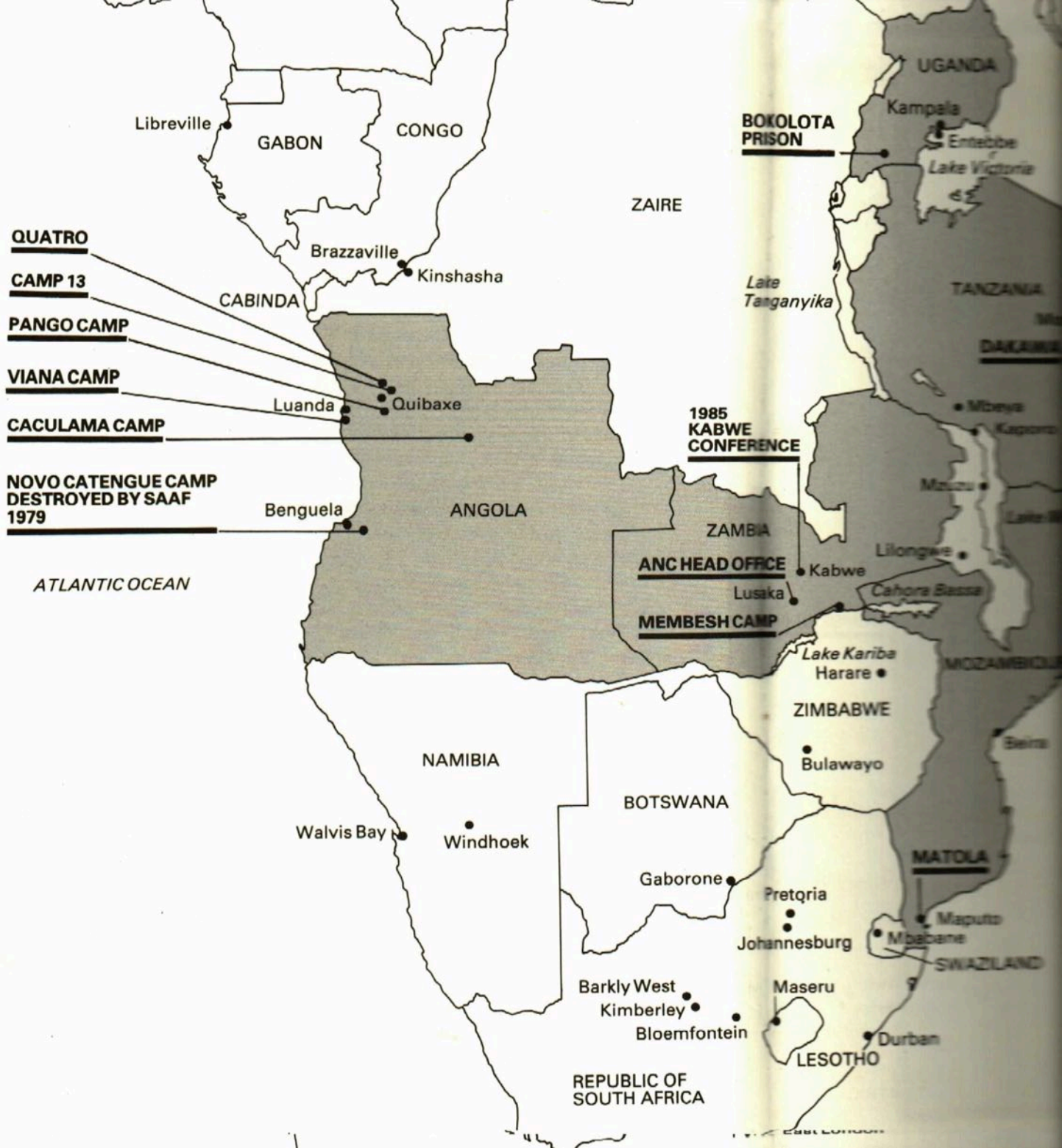
In Johannesburg on 30 August 1993, at a press conference attended by ANC president Nelson Mandela, secretary-general Cyril Ramaphosa and other senior NEC executives, Ramaphosa said, on behalf of the NEC, that the ANC 'accepts collective responsibility for the proven violations of human rights in a community of its camps and centres. It expresses profound regret and apology for each and every such transgression'. He said this acceptance of responsibility was a 'historic departure from the usual refusal of government and political organisations to make such admissions' and that these violations 'can in no way be equated to the activities of the apartheid state'. The issue of compensation to victims needed to be settled 'across the board' as partial payment or partial reparation was unfair to perpetrators and victims alike. Therefore no compensation would be paid to victims by the ANC and no one would be punished immediately. It was necessary that a 'Truth Commission' be established. 'The purpose of the Truth Commission will be to investigate all violations of human rights – killings, disappearances, torture – from all quarters. This will not be a Nuremburg Tribunal.' Responding to questions, Mandela said that the South African government should fund the Truth Commission and appoint it in consultation with the ANC and other par-

ties. (This tongue-in cheek suggestion presupposes that the National Party government will cooperate by washing its own dirty linen in public.) The same day, Thabo Mbeki, the newly appointed chairman of the ANC, speaking on the SABC television programme Agenda, said that compensation to ANC victims should be paid by the government of the day and that the taxpayer should similarly have to pay for compensation for police brutality. He also said that the Motuenyane Commission's implication of MK commander Joe Modise and ANC deputy secretary-general Jacob Zuma in human rights violations was 'factually incorrect'.

To me and to many others this response appeared sickeningly self-righteous and demonstrated only that the ANC had learnt no lesson at all from its 'self examination'. We have no option but to go forward; the brave new South Africa will have to be built on the skeletons of the past, but we cannot allow those who are guilty of having abused power in the past to wield any power in the future. This is the least we can do for those, black and white, who made sacrifices or gave their lives for a new democratic South Africa.

South Africa made the mistake of installing an apartheid regime; let it not make the second mistake of handing power to communists. The only history of governance that the ANC has had was characterised by incompetence, corruption, cruelty and a callous disregard for democracy and human rights. Under the tutelage of the SACP, the Mbokodo subverted Albert Luthuli's ANC into Oliver Tambo's, which Nelson Mandela has found it expedient to retain. He has ignored the recommendations and advice of the two ANC-appointed commissions of inquiry and decided that no reparations will be made, nor will the Mbokodo be punished. The ANC's dismissal of the matter is typical of the manner dissidents were treated in exile.

I remain a firm supporter of Albert Luthuli's ANC.
May God bless South Africa.



Libreville

GABON

CONGO

ZAIRE

BOKOLOTA PRISON

UGANDA

Kampala

Entebbe

Lake Victoria

QUATRO

CAMP 13

PANGO CAMP

VIANA CAMP

CACULAMA CAMP

NOVO CATENGUE CAMP
DESTROYED BY SAAF
1979

CABINDA

Brazzaville

Kinshasha

Luanda

Quibaxe

Benguela

ANGOLA

1985
KABWE
CONFERENCE

ZAMBIA

ANC HEAD OFFICE

MEMBESH CAMP

Lake
Tanganyika

TANZANIA

DAKARA

Mbeya

Kaporo

Mozu

Lilongwe

Cahora Bassa

Lake Kariba

Harare

ZIMBABWE

Bulawayo

NAMIBIA

Walvis Bay

Windhoek

BOTSWANA

Gaborone

Pretoria

Johannesburg

Barkly West

Kimberley

Bloemfontein

Maseru

LESOTHO

REPUBLIC OF
SOUTH AFRICA

Durban

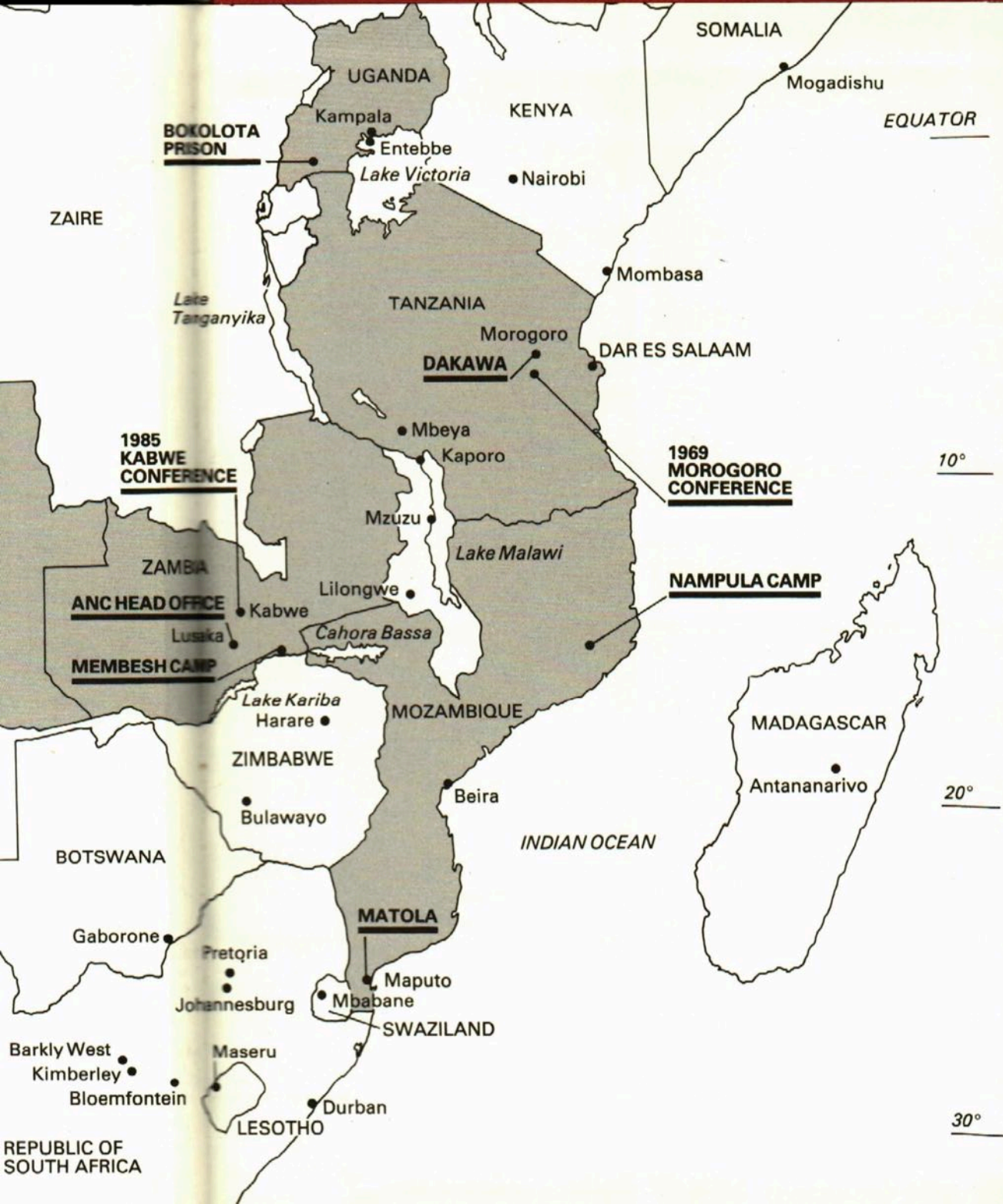
MATOLA

Maputo

Mobane

SWAZILAND

ATLANTIC OCEAN





Mwezi Twala left South Africa in 1975 to join Umkhonto we Sizwe. He was trained in the USSR and worked as an MK instructor in Mozambique, Zambia, and Angola before being incarcerated in Quatro, the 'rehabilitation camp', that he had helped build. After escaping from Dakawa camp in Tanzania, he returned to South Africa and became a founder member of the Returned Exiles Coordinating Committee, a group that endeavours to protect the interests of victims of the Mbokodo. He now works as an organiser for the Inkatha Freedom Party.



Dr Ed Benard is a consulting engineer, educated in South Africa and the USA in engineering and business administration. His interest in the Mbokodo arose as a consequence of his being selected by the Inkatha Freedom Party to serve as one of its delegates on Work Group 1 at the multi-party Conference for Democracy in South Africa (CODESA), which had as one of its tasks the resolution of conflicts relating to political prisoners.

MBOKODO
is a Xhosa word which means
'the grinding stone'.
This name was given to
the security branch of the
African National Congress's
armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe,
because it 'ground' people
in the same way that
the grinding stone crushes
corn to meal.

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